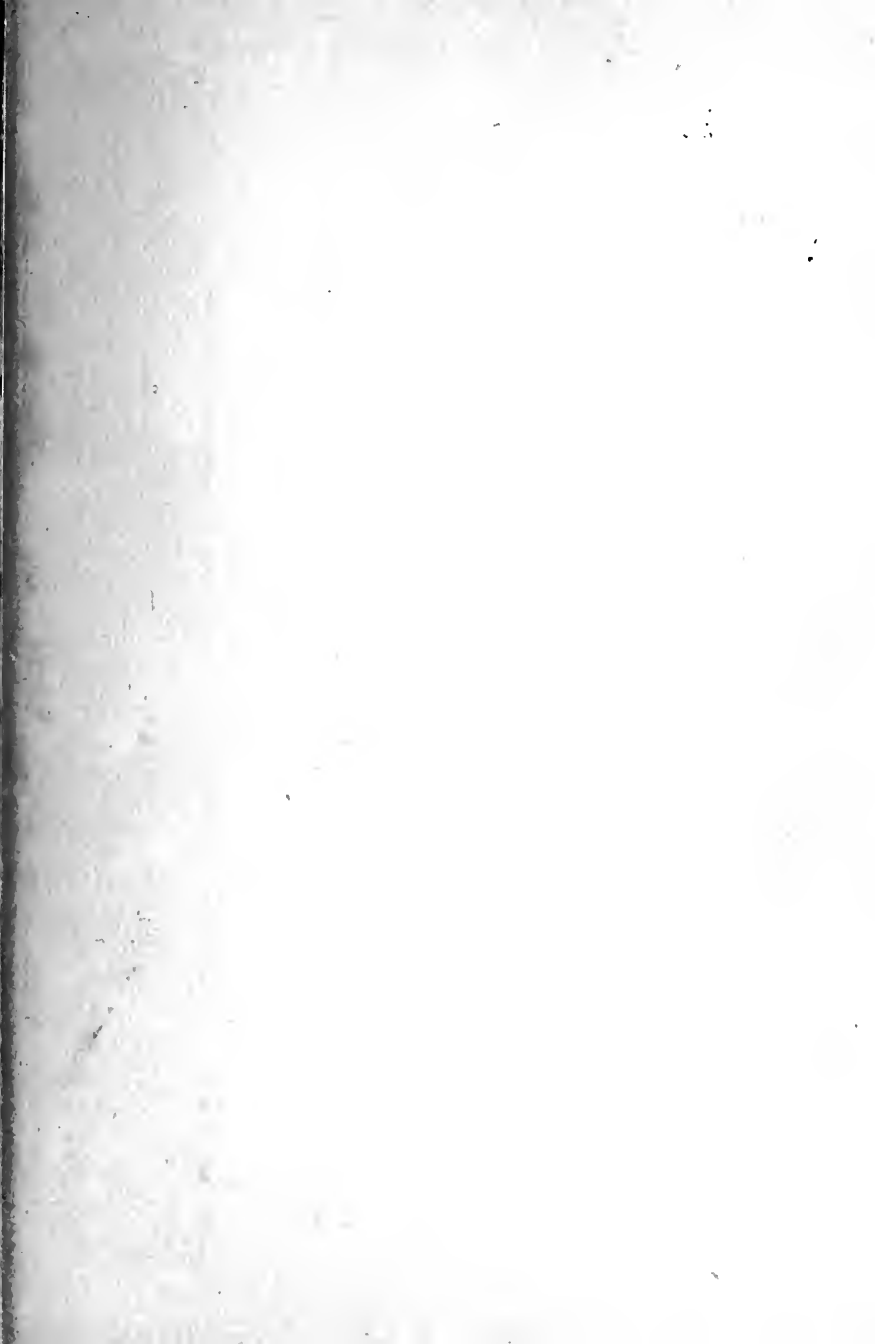


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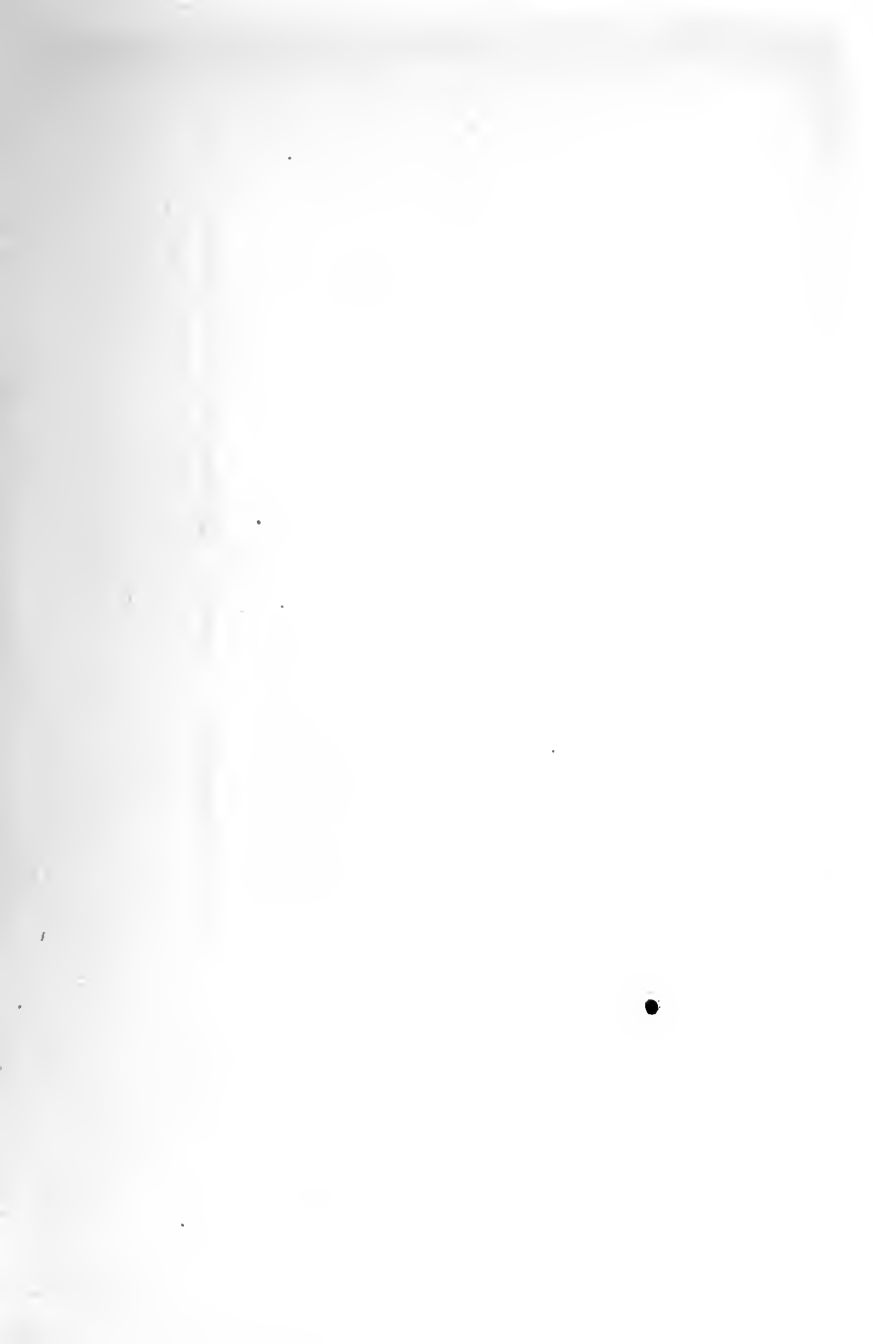
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יהודה אבן גאון

LEON GORDON

AN APPRECIATION

BY

ABRAHAM BENEDICT RHINE



PHILADELPHIA

THE JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY OF AMERICA

1910

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To
My Dear Father

MEYER RHINE

*whose scholarly attainments and love for the
Hebrew language and literature made it
possible for his son to enjoy and
appreciate poets like*

LEON GORDON

*this first attempt at authorship is
affectionately dedicated*

PREFACE

This essay, originally written in 1902 as a thesis for the Rabbinical degree of the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati, is an attempt to introduce the American Jewish public to the Hebrew literature of the nineteenth century. The study of this period, which constitutes one of the most pathetic chapters in Jewish history, will come in the nature of a revelation to the reader to whom the Hebrew language is a *terra incognita*. It will unfold to him a tale of the struggle between the old order of things and the new, between medievalism and modernity—a story of the longing of the Jewish soul for emancipation. He will meet with men of power and of genius, above all, with an array of heroes whose life was a constant battle in behalf of enlightenment and civilization. Incidentally, a study of nineteenth century Hebrew literature cannot but tend to raise the Russian Jew in the estimation of his American brother, and bring about a clearer understanding between them, which will inevitably result in closer fellowship and a firmer tie of sympathy.

PREFACE

A part of this essay, comprising Chapters V and VI, was published in "The Jewish Quarterly Review," April, 1906; and it was the complimentary criticism of its learned editor, Mr. Israel Abrahams, that encouraged me to offer the essay for publication in its entirety.

I take this occasion to express my obligation to Mr. A. S. Freidus, the genial librarian of the Jewish Department of the New York Public Library, who was of great assistance to me in gathering the material for this essay, and helped me otherwise with valuable suggestions.

A. B. RHINE.

HOT SPRINGS, ARK., December 11, 1907.

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INTRODUCTION

The struggle of the human mind to emancipate itself from the fetters of credulity and superstition and exercise its own God-given powers of pure thinking and unclouded vision, a struggle that dates its beginning from dimmest antiquity, when man first became conscious of his own existence and that of the universe about him, is one of the most absorbing phenomena within the wide range of human experience.

The tremendous difference between the attitude of the European of to-day towards himself, towards his fellow-men, and towards nature, and the attitude assumed by the Asiatic of antiquity, a difference commonly summed up in the single word Progress, is it not the resultant of that struggle without which the change would have been impossible? Evolution is not brought about by leaps; development is gradual and slow. Man is loath to part with his cherished thoughts, which thus become prejudices; and therein lies the pathos of the history of human achievement. The grand sum total of human knowledge, which pierces the

heavens and fathoms the ocean, was accumulated by the laborious effort and painful exertion of myriads of men of untold generations; and, for the most part, it is composed of their very heart and life-blood. Like the builders of the Egyptian pyramids, which still stand and bear mute testimony to a life that was, the builders of the pyramids of the intellect contributed, by their incessant endeavor, each his mite towards the erection of the great monument of the intellect, to stand for all time. Some may have been mere hod-carriers, mere day-laborers; but without their labor the result would have been an impossibility. How grateful, then, ought we to be to the great master-minds that conceived, planned, and executed the pyramids of the human intellect! Yet, how little do we think of the price they paid for their achievements!

This struggle of the human mind, the reluctance to part with effete beliefs, and the promptings of reason that they must be done away with, has been going on among the Jewish people as well as among other nations. Only in the case of the Jew it has been keener, more accentuated, hence, more tragic. Since the loss of his national independence and the beginning of the Diaspora, Israel has been thrown

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upon his intellectual resources for his existence. The straightforward means of earning a livelihood he was deprived of by prejudice and persecution; other and subtler means had to be found. The barriers had to be circumvented. Under the stress of circumstances, and by the law of nature which develops, in a complex organism, the peculiar organ that is best adapted for the maintenance of life, the intellectual powers of the Jew were strengthened above those of his neighbors. But, deprived as he was of intercourse with the outside world, the activity of his mind displayed itself along lines in harmony with his own genius, along the lines of his religion. For this religion it was, this common Judaism, that held the scattered remnant of Israel together. Their Law was their common inheritance. And, since the active force of their intellect had to find an outlet—for, in the words of Manè, “the human spirit knows no bounds”—it naturally coupled itself with their religion, and the result was the stupendous literature of the Talmudim and Midrashim, with their innumerable annotations, addenda, commentaries, and responsa.

The deeper the darkness of oppression that surrounded them, the more unbearable the hatred and disdain of the Christian world, the further did the

Jews withdraw within themselves, the prouder was their consciousness of their own intellectual supremacy, and the more fervently and passionately did they cling to their religion. Not only did the Talmud become the bulwark of Judaism, but even the later Rabbinical writings assumed a sacredness and authority second only to that of the Bible and the Talmud. Why not? Was not the sacred literature of the Jews their all in all? Was it not the arena in which their intellectual giants met in determined, though unbloody, combat? Was it not their only refuge for comfort and consolation? Was it not the common tie that united them? It was their very life, their existence. We can therefore easily understand their attitude towards any attempt at innovation or reforms in religious practice, and their persecution of their own brethren that dared advocate them. "Any one who is not with us is against us; any one who has no sympathy with the religious practices laid down by Rabbinical authorities is a traitor, and has sold himself to the enemy." Naturally, it was inevitable that in the course of time non-Jewish practices and beliefs should creep in among them; in fact, Judaism had assumed, under the influence of the later Rabbis, an aspect different from and more rigorous

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even than Talmudic Judaism. Still, as the body of outside beliefs and practices was sanctioned by the Rabbis, and was based on the Talmud, it became part and parcel of Judaism, and was observed with the reverence paid to the more essential rites of the Jewish faith.

But *nichts ist dauernd als der Wechsel*. The apparent petrification of Rabbinical Judaism could not endure forever. Beneath the outer crust of obstinacy there was a warm heart palpitating with susceptibility to outside influences; and, like all living organisms subject to the laws of life, which demand that dead matter be discarded and rejected, and life-sustaining nutriment be absorbed, Judaism had to undergo a change. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the sect of Hasidim arose with their doctrines of enthusiasm, cheerfulness, and joy, as a protest against cold, unattractive, intellectual Rabbinism. However, even the Hasidim did not dare infringe upon Rabbinical Judaism to any appreciable extent, beyond changing the Prayer Book and giving prominence to the Zohar; but they soon succumbed to a blind hero worship, tantamount to idolatry, paid to their several saints. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, under the influence from without of French skepticism

and ideals of human rights, and from within of Mendelssohn, a new movement was set on foot among German Jews—a movement that gathered momentum with the advance of the spirit of democracy and liberalism—known as the Haskalah, or culture. Rabbinical Judaism, with its excrescences of superstition and credulity, had to give way to a Judaism more decorous, more polished, more in accordance with the spirit of the age. This was the slogan of the Maskilim, or culturists, and their ideals spread rapidly, first in Galicia, then in Poland and Russia.

Such ideals, aiming at the destruction of all that was dear and sacred to the adherents of Orthodoxy, could not but meet with violent opposition on their part. The Jews were divided into two hostile camps, the young generation standing for culture, the old for the Talmud. In Germany, however, the struggle, though bitter, was short and decisive. The preachers of culture carried the day; conditions were in their favor. The principles of the French Revolution infected the masses of Germany. Liberalism, though suppressed by the reaction, was still in the air. The German people itself became cultured to a remarkable extent, and the German Jews could not withstand the contagion.

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They were constantly in hope of being enfranchised, and they had to prepare themselves for it. The enfranchisement that came in 1848 inclined the beam to the side of culture, and the movement was crowned with success. Not so in Russia. The population among whom the Jews dwelt was itself steeped in the deepest fanaticism and ignorance. Most of the natives were serfs; the nobles showed their superiority only in their arrogance and brutality. The Government was autocratic in the extreme. The thought of emancipation never entered the minds either of the Jews or of the Government. What good, then, could the Jews gain by culture? Was it not better for them to remain in their present condition than change the old for a new that held out no prospect of better days? Hence the difficulty besetting the path of the few Russian pioneers of the Haskalah that had imbibed the German spirit, that beheld a new light, the light of European civilization, and were eager to hold it aloft among them that walked in darkness.

The fight was protracted, and it was waged with bitter determination on both sides. The older generation looked down with contempt upon the advocates of the new-fangled ideas; the younger generation worked with enthusiasm and resolution.

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Much did they suffer at the hands of the adherents of the old; much were they persecuted; but, as always, persecution defeated its own ends; it only created new champions for the ideals it endeavored to crush. The struggle is still going on to-day, but the Maskilim, by dint of labor, determination, and perseverance, have succeeded in rearing up a new generation of Russian Jews, combining European culture with Jewish learning, uniting the civilizations of the East and the West. And foremost in the ranks of these champions of civilization, in the second half of the nineteenth century, stands Leon Gordon, scholar, poet, man of action, a presentation of whose life and works is attempted in the following pages.

CHAPTER I

THE PIONEERS OF THE HASKALAH

The condition of the Russian Jews in the first half of the nineteenth century was most deplorable. Alexander I. (1801-1825), fickle and vacillating, began his reign as a semi-liberal, and his Jewish subjects hoped for an amelioration of their condition at his hands. Imbued at first with the Western spirit, and carried away by his admiration for Napoleon, he dreamed of curing his Empire of the chronic disease of Asiatic autocracy, and establishing a government on the lines of freedom and justice. While under the influence of these dreams, he turned his attention to the Jewish problem, and the rigor of the exceptional laws against the Jews was somewhat relaxed. During the Napoleonic wars, and particularly at the time of the French invasion, the laws against them were allowed to lapse, and the Czar made a personal appeal to them for help against the French. With characteristic patriotism, the Jews rendered all the help in their power; and, in return, the Imperial promise was

made, that they should be given equal rights with other Russian subjects.¹ In 1804 an ukase was issued giving the Jewish youth the privilege of attending Russian universities. The Czar also hit upon colonization as a solution of the Jewish problem. From 1807 to 1810 several thousands of Jews were transferred to the uninhabited crown lands in the Government of Kherson, and more were sent there in 1822-1823.² But by 1822 the Imperial pledge of giving the Jews equal rights had been so completely forgotten that the same Czar abolished most of the Consistorial organizations, with their independent communal jurisdiction, which the Jews had enjoyed since the days of the Polish kings.³

Alexander had completely changed. No vestige was left of his dreams of a constitutional government. The bugaboo Napoleon had been made harmless; and, though, in the first flush of victory, Alexander's heart went out to his Jewish subjects, his enthusiasm soon subsided, and he became a reckless, irresponsible tyrant. His colonization scheme proved a failure. The Czar could not understand that a race of agriculturists cannot be created in a day. Besides, had the supervision of the scheme been entrusted to men qualified by knowledge and

experience, the failure might not have been so complete. But, in accordance with Russian methods, the charge of supervising the Jewish colonies was put into the hands of unscrupulous, ignorant officials, retired generals for the most part, who ruled the colonists with the utmost brutality. The money intended for the budding colonies was frittered away among the officials; neither houses nor the proper implements were provided for them as promised. To these obstacles other misfortunes were superadded—bad harvests, epidemics, severity of the climate, and privations of every kind. “The Jewish colonists,” say the official reports of the time, “are dying of hunger and cold in the heart of the steppes.” Five thousand of their number, out of a total of ten thousand, succumbed in a few years.⁴ Thus terminated the charitable intentions of Alexander I.

The hopes for ameliorated conditions were blasted by the whim of the despot, and the Russian Jews had to bend their neck again beneath the yoke of hateful and inhuman laws. Accustomed though the Jews were to disappointments and privations, it required all their powers of resistance, and all the strength of desperate determination, to survive the reign of terror that was to follow. Nicho-

las I. (1825-1855), or Haman II., an epithet applied to him in every Jewish mind, was resolved upon the destruction of his Jewish subjects by means of conversion. He was "a man of immense personal force, tireless energy, and original ideas, which, from their very narrowness, ran deep and strong."⁵ An autocrat in the fullest sense of the term, an extreme fanatic, combining in himself all the prejudices transmitted to him by his Tartar ancestors, he began to execute his plans with the frankness and cruelty of a Zulu Indian. To form a correct notion of his policy and its execution, it will be best to give a digest of the fifth chapter of Mr. Harold Frederic's book, "The New Exodus."

"Nicholas had an essentially military mind. He began his propaganda against Israel through martial channels. In April, 1827, he issued an ukase rendering Jews liable to military conscription like other subjects. Unlike other subjects, however, the Jewish recruit had to serve twenty-five years without ever being eligible to promotion. But, though no instructions were committed to paper, it became speedily understood in the army that the Czar desired heavy pressure to be put upon the Hebrew soldiers, to win them over to baptism. This pressure became universal, and naturally took the shape of cruel torment to the obdurate.

"But this process was too slow. Accordingly, Nicholas invented a scheme of military colonies, or schools, to be planted

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in the remote south, to be devoted to the combined conversion and martial training of the Hebrew youth. This was an adaptation of the plan of settling regiments of the line about in the farm lands among the crown serfs, which General Arakcheieff had proposed and carried out under the preceding reign. Under this pretty plan, press-gangs were now deputed to prowl about the Pale and forcibly abduct Jewish boys of from five to ten years of age. These were carried off to the southern settlement camps, and, after a violent baptism, were trained to the use of arms, and brought up as soldiers. Jewish boys are, however, extremely precocious in the matter of theological learning. Their religious education begins so early that at eight their convictions are quite as well grounded as those of their elders. Some of these lads used to resist baptism; then it was the commandant's thoughtful custom to put them in solitary confinement and feed them on salt herrings without water to drink, until they consented to accept the baptismal rite.

"But it was not alone through the machinery of the army that the proselyting screws were put upon Israel. In every walk of life rewards were visibly dangled before the eyes of the Jews if they would forsake Judaism. The local officials, eagerly interpreting and putting into execution the desires of their master, did abominable and often ridiculous things. The only mode of Europeanizing the Czar's Jewish subjects that they could conceive of was, even so late as the days of the Crimean War, to station policemen at the corners of the streets leading to the Jewish quarters, their business being to catch Jews as they passed and cut off with scissors their long earlocks, or *peies*, and the skirts of their caftans.

"Nicholas II. made serious efforts to plant Jews upon the

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soil as agriculturists. The story of these attempts is one of the most melancholy in the whole unhappy record of the race—at once melancholy and grimly grotesque. . . . Great colonies of Jews, sometimes numbering hundreds of families, were now gathered up promiscuously, transported across to the desolate prairie lands of Novorossüsk, and dumped down upon the unbroken soil to thrive by agriculture. In any case the experiment could have promised scant success. As it was managed, it became simply murderous. A staff of officials, almost as numerous as the colonists themselves, was appointed to control things. Each family was supposed to be granted one hundred and fifty roubles, but of this the officials gave the family only thirty. The rest purported to have been expended in buying land, farm machinery, building houses, etc. But seven-eighths of it was really stolen, and such colonists as did not die on the road found only groups of shanties not fit for pigs, and implements which broke in their hands. Here, under the control of brutal officials who knouted the incapable, but could not advise or instruct the industrious, these unhappy town Jews died of epidemics or starvation. The chief digging they did was digging of graves.

“The report of M. Stemple, who was superintendent of the Ekaterinoslav settlements, made in 1847, which was not especially sympathetic to the Jews, presents an almost incredible tale of suffering. Official documents picture the colonists as arriving at the beginning of winter, to find a cluster of wretched huts, damp, half-open, and too low for a man to stand upright in, prepared for them to inhabit. These cabins had, let it be borne in mind, cost the Government enormous sums of money. The Jews begged to be allowed to reconstruct these shanties; permission was refused by the officials. Stemple, the superintendent,

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then suggested that the Jews should be allowed to find shelter in neighboring villages until spring. This also was refused, and they were peremptorily ordered to occupy the houses assigned to them. Those who had already sought refuge in the villages round about were driven back by the Cossacks, under circumstances of the greatest barbarism. Epidemics of scurvy and small-pox broke out shortly after."

The discrimination against the Jewish colonists and Jews in general is further shown by Professor Leo Errara:

"To German and Bulgarian colonists sixty dessiatines * of land were given, which they were allowed to select, and new lots were granted to them as their families grew in numbers. They were also permitted to follow some trade or business according to their liking. To the Jews, however, only thirty dessiatines of land were allotted, which were selected by the administration; seven dessiatines were afterwards taken away. When the family increased, their very inadequate tract of land was not augmented. . . . Jewish colonists were absolutely forbidden to obtain any supplementary income for themselves by following some occupation other than that of agriculture." ⁶

Nicholas I. still further diminished the Pale of Settlement by excluding the towns of Kiev, Nicolaiev, and Sebastopol, and he renewed the law of his predecessor, Alexander I., with regard to the fifty versts on the Eastern frontier, the belt within

* A Russian land measure = 2.702 English acres.

which it was forbidden to the Jews to erect their domicile.⁷ Expulsion from cities was also resorted to, as in the good old times of the Middle Ages. In 1829 the Jews were banished from Nicolaiev, but were recalled in 1830, when it was recognized how great an injury their expulsion had caused the city.⁸ In the same year the Karaite Jews of Trok, Wilna, obtained a decree of expulsion against the other Jews of the town.⁹ The Christian guilds of Knyshin, in 1845, procured the expulsion of the Jews from their town; in 1858 we find them admitting that it had done injury to the place, and they begged that the order be revoked.¹⁰ The "milch-cow theory" was in full vogue in Russia. And yet Professor Leo Errara has the goodness to remark that "with these exceptions it would be unjust to ignore the comparative peace which the Jews enjoyed in this reign; or to forget that the Czar allowed them to leave their own special districts in order to visit the great fairs,"¹¹—as if the great fairs could have been successful without the help of the Jewish merchants. The only redeeming feature in the reign of Nicholas was the exception made in Russian laws in favor of the Jews graduated from the higher schools of the Empire. They were allowed liberty of residence

throughout the realm. The opportunities which Nicholas I. finally offered to the Jews in the matter of education were not, however, very generally embraced during this reign. The Jews remembered his early devices of abducting and forcibly baptizing their boys, and suspected some new scheme of conversion or perversion in this opening of schools.

The result of such persecution was, in the words of Harold Frederic, "to solidify the Jews into a dense, hard-baked, and endlessly resistant mass." The policy of conversion, aimed at their very life-blood, their religion, was opposed with all the determination of despair. They clung to the study of the Talmud; and all the minutiae of the Rabbinical laws were practised and regarded as essentials of Judaism. Withdrawing deeper and deeper within themselves, and farther and farther away from the outside world, they gradually came to consider all things not Jewish as against Judaism. They looked with hatred upon secular education as subversive of Judaism, or, at best, as useless, and a waste of time that might be devoted with better advantage to the Torah. Every Jewish youth was taught the Bible and Talmud; but the study of the latter was considered even more important than that of the

former, apparently because the Talmud was the frequent subject of attack and ridicule by the enemies of Judaism. The Shulhan Aruk was the legal code, and its practical laws, together with the glosses of Isserles, were observed in all their detail. Pilpulism, or casuistry, in the study of Rabbinical writings was developed to the utmost degree. The great mass of the people, particularly the Hasidim, were sunk in the deepest superstitions and fanaticism. Devils and ghosts were believed in; miracles on the part of the Rabbis were reported and accepted as indisputable facts. Talmudic fables were taken literally; the belief in charms, cameos, and Gilgulim was considered an essential of religion. The Rabbis, eager to protect Judaism from the pressure brought to bear against it by Nicholas, became very rigorous in their interpretation of Rabbinical laws. Moreover, Nicholas placed a tremendous weapon in the hands of the elders and Orthodox leaders in every Jewish community, by making the Kahal, or Jewish Consistories, responsible for furnishing the due quota of Jewish recruits. The old people of the strict Talmudic sect had it in their power to deliver over to the bondage of the army, at their own discretion and at all times, any young Jew that of-

fended them, or whose opinions they regarded as dangerous, because heterodox.¹² Nor did they hesitate to misuse their power in this way. The officials of the Jewish Consistories were, for the most part, greedy, unscrupulous men, who used their tremendous power for their own gain. Poor boys were often substituted for the sons of the rich liable to conscription, for a money consideration, which the elders pocketed. This misrule resulted in a state of anarchy. The abduction of small boys by the press-gangs, many members of which were Jews, spread terror and desolation in Jewish homes. The "catchers" were particularly the objects of abhorrence, and often summary vengeance was executed upon them. The children of the "catchers" were frequently murdered by the exasperated parents of the abducted children. Add to this the extreme poverty of the populace—for Jews were not allowed either to lease or own land, nor engage in commerce and manufacture—and the picture of horror is complete.

In such circumstances it seems almost miraculous that, in spite of the inner and outer isolation of the Jews, the light of Western civilization succeeded in penetrating the darkness of the Pale. That it did pierce it is due to the Haskalah movement. Grad-

ually it lighted up the whole Jewish horizon. It started in Königsberg, under the influence of Mendelssohn and Wessely. In 1783, a band of Jewish young men, enthusiasts in the cause of introducing European culture among their brethren, founded a Hebrew periodical, *Ha-Meassef*, "The Gatherer," as a medium of propaganda. The contributors to this periodical, Euchel, Bresselau, Friedlaender, Wolfsohn, Friedrichsfeld, Satanow, and others, were men for the most part who combined profound Hebrew knowledge with more or less academic training, and who were inspired with a sincere desire to introduce reforms in Judaism and show their brethren the necessity of a secular education in connection with their religious training. The literary productions of the *Meassef* have no enduring value;¹³ but they served their purpose at the time, and, unconsciously perhaps, they laid the foundation for a new Hebrew literature, which was destined to become a great factor in the uplifting of their people in Russia and Poland. The *Meassef* contained Biblical exegesis, occasional poems, and biographies, and did a great deal towards purifying the Hebrew language from the conceits and artificial diction of former writers. It brought about a revival in the Jewish national conscious-

ness; it inspired a feeling of love for the people and its language, and the desire for the perpetuation of both.

The object of the *Meassefim* was not assimilation and the destruction of Judaism. Judaism was secure enough with the disciples of Ezekiel Landau and Raphael Cohen. What they worked for was to show the Jews who were steeped in *Pilpulism* that the outside world was worth while noticing, and that a secular education was a necessity. They did not think the *Haskalah* subversive of Judaism. They had complete faith in the possibility of uniting Judaism with culture. Yet, unconsciously, their intentions were national; else how account for their eagerness to rehabilitate the forsaken Hebrew tongue and purify the language, how account for their joy at every new apparition on the horizon of Hebrew literature? The writers of the period were men with a message to their generation, and their plain and impressive words were both new and useful to their readers."

The *Meassef* ceased publication in 1797, but the foundation of a new literature thus laid was firmly established. It was succeeded in 1821-1832 by the *Bikkure ha-Ittim*, founded by Solomon Cohen and conducted along the same lines as the first periodi-

cal. Its literature was not of a high order. It was filled either with reprints from the Meassef or with meaningless rhymes and philosophizing articles, the work of tyros.¹⁵ "This was a period of homunculi, of small idealists and small ideals. If there were any ideals at all, they were of a negative character: 'That we might not believe in falsehood and not turn after false opinions.' Literature was not confined to great writers; anybody wrote if only he knew Hebrew. The writers had no especial object in view; they wrote for the sake of seeing their names in print, and as an exercise in Hebrew; above all, because other nations wrote, and what other nations do, Jews must necessarily imitate. They wanted to destroy the old Judaism of the Talmud and the Ghetto. Their ideals were humanitarian and political, and were simply a repetition of the Haskalah of the Meassefim."¹⁶ Nevertheless, the neo-Hebraic literature made remarkable strides, especially in Galicia. Erter wrote his inimitable satires on Hasidic life, *Ha-Zofeh le-Bet Yisrael*; Krochmal busied himself with theological philosophy in his *Moreh Nebuche ha-Zeman* ("Guide to the Perplexed of the Time"); and Rapoport was engaged in critical studies on the Bible and Jewish history. Jehudah Löb Jeiteles,

who succeeded Moses Landau as editor of the *Bikkure ha-Ittim*, made the paper truly scientific, and a factor in Jewish life; and his work was continued by S. L. Goldenberg in the *Kerem Hemed* (1833). The *Maskilim* had now become a force. Their slogan was the same as Rapoport's: "We have to educate our people in order to find favor with out neighbors. We are hated only because we lack culture";¹⁷ and the work of education went steadily on.

It was inevitable that the influence of the new movement should make itself felt in Russia and in Russian Poland; as a matter of fact, the new movement had had its adherents in Russia from its incipency. Even Elijah Wilna, pietist and Talmudist though he was, had, indirectly and unconsciously perhaps, contributed towards the advance of the new ideas. He had introduced a new system in Rabbinical studies; discarding *Pilpulism*, he studied grammar (his grammatical notes on some portions of Genesis are published in the first volume of Rabinowitz's *Keneset Yisrael*), and encouraged his disciple, Rabbi Baruch, of Sklow, to translate scientific works into Hebrew.¹⁸ The *Meassef* at its first appearance had Polish contributors in the persons of Bensew and Satañow, as well as

a number of subscribers in Poland and Russia. But these were individual exceptions; they were not numerous and strong enough to form a class. The new ideas, however, gained ground gradually, and, during the reign of Nicholas, the Haskalah in Russia assumed a form of its own, under the influence of Isaac Bär Levinsohn, S. J. Fuenn, M. A. Günzburg, Slonimski, and Abraham Bär Levinsohn.

Isaac Bär Levinsohn (1788-1860) was a man of remarkable erudition. Not only was he a Talmudic scholar of extraordinary acumen, but he possessed also a knowledge of secular subjects and of several European languages. Mastered by sincere love for his people, and by the desire to emancipate them from their intellectual isolation, he brought his great storehouse of Hebrew learning to bear upon this purpose. He realized that philosophy and logic would not convince the people that secular education is sanctioned by Judaism. The only way to accomplish this was to prove from the Rabbinical sources themselves that the very Rabbinical authorities and all shining lights of Judaism were men that studied the sciences and languages outside of Hebrew. For this purpose he wrote, in 1828, the *Te'uddah be-Yisrael*. He showed by incontro-

vertible proof, from all Jewish sources, that the greatest Rabbis, with few exceptions, have recognized the value of secular education, and that a knowledge of the sciences is not subversive of Judaism. The book was written in a straightforward manner, free from all sophistry and unnecessary philosophy, and it was conceived in so thoroughly a Jewish spirit that even the ultra-Orthodox could find no fault with it, except, indeed, as Rabbi Abele, of Wilna, expressed it, "that it was not written by Elijah Wilna." By this book Levinsohn removed at one stroke the greatest obstacle to the spread of the Haskalah—the religious prejudice against it. He convinced his people of the necessity of a knowledge of the vernacular, the sciences, and Hebrew grammar. In the same year he completed his *Bet Yehudah*, a history of Judaism and Jewish sects; and in 1837 he wrote *Efes Dammim*, a refutation of the blood-accusation charges, which was translated into English by Dr. Loewe, in 1840, at the instance of Sir Moses Montefiore, in connection with the Damascus affair.

The influence which his works in behalf of the education of his people exerted attracted the attention of the Minister of Education and of Czar Nicholas, and he took advantage of this favorable

notice of the Government for the founding of Jewish schools throughout the Empire. In this way Levinsohn, more than any other individual, prepared the way for the Haskalah in Russia.²⁹

Samuel Joseph Fuenn (1819-1891), also a product of the old generation, combined thorough Talmudic scholarship with a knowledge of modern languages. He was not an original writer; he devoted himself mostly to useful translations into Hebrew, which opened a new field for the reflection of the thoughtful. Among the more important of his translations were a Bible history after Zunz (1847) and a Russian grammar in Yiddish (in the same year). He was a teacher in the Hebrew school of Wilna in 1841, and in the Seminary of Wilna opened by the Government in 1848. In 1856 he was appointed curator of all the Hebrew schools in the province of Wilna, and by his personal example he showed the possibility of uniting Judaism with culture. The greatest service he rendered Hebrew literature was, however, by the publication of the *Pirhe Zafon*, a journal modelled after the *Meassef*, of which only two volumes appeared (1841-1844), and *Ha-Karmel*, a weekly, in 1859. He took an active part in communal affairs, was kind and generous, in a word, a true

idealist. His very personality gained adherents for the cause of the Haskalah.²⁰

Mordecai Aaron Günzburg (1796-1846), justly styled "the Father of Hebrew Prose," was, like Fuenn, a translator primarily, but he possessed a pure, incisive style, which far surpassed that of his predecessors. Though he did not create anything lasting as far as subject-matter is concerned, he taught the younger generation a new language, free from the stilted rhetoric of his contemporaries, and his works are even to-day important as models of style. He wrote several books on the Napoleonic wars in Russia; a history of the blood-accusation of Damascus in 1840, and an account of Montefiore's travels in Russia in behalf of his brethren (1860).²¹

Hayyim Selig Slonimski succeeded to a great extent in popularizing mathematics among his people, by writing works on mathematics and astronomy in Hebrew. Abraham Bär Lebensohn (1789-1878), scholar, grammarian, and a professor in the Wilna Seminary, gained a great reputation as a poet by his *Shire Sefat Kodesh*. As a matter of fact, his poetry is nothing but philosophical speculations in rhyme; there is neither depth nor poetic feeling in his lines. But he was a great rhetorician, a master of Hebrew. His notes on

Bensew's Hebrew grammar secured a wide circulation, and thus he, like Günzburg, was instrumental in creating a correct, literary Hebrew, modelled after the language of European literatures. Together with the bibliographer Ben-Jacob, he published the Pentateuch with Mendelssohn's translation, and thereby helped to spread a knowledge of German among the young Talmudic students.²²

Outside of the productions of these men, the literature of the period had no relation whatever to the crying needs of the time. Abraham Mapu (1808-1867), a brilliant stylist, busied himself with the portrayal of the past in his *Ahabat Ziyon*; Kalman Shulman, a poet in prose, labored on a translation of Eugène Sue's "Mysteries of Paris" into Hebrew; and Mordecai Plungian endeavored to explain away difficult passages in the Bible. There was a number of scholars in Russia, outside of those mentioned above, especially the men connected with the two Seminaries. In Wilna there were Scherschewski, Salkind, Klaczko, Behak, and Katzenellenbogen; in Jitomir, Eichenbaum, Zweifel, Suchostaver, Bakst, Politznetzky, and Lerner. However, they were all above the people; either they were occupied with scholarly

works, or they wrote on subjects that had nothing to do with Judaism and with their own times.²³ None of them thought of finding ways and means of improving the condition of their people. "The literature of the day was a literature of panegyrics; every writer looked upon himself as a Socrates, a Huss, a Galileo—a martyr to his ideals."²⁴ But they did nothing to help their people in a practical way.

And yet these men accomplished a great deal. They created a class, a generation of men, that no longer looked askance at education and culture, and a set of young men ready to sacrifice their all in order to get out of the intellectual Ghetto and enter the infinite world of secular wisdom. They had transplanted the new Hebrew literature from Germany where, taken all in all, it was an exotic, to the more congenial Russian soil;* and they gleaned it, fenced it in, strengthened, and purified

* The renaissance of the Hebrew language was the result of necessity. The Jews of the Slavic countries always felt a strong kinship with each other, and the need of a common language. In Lithuania there was an additional reason. With the destruction of the Polish nationality, the Polish language was almost completely forgotten, and as no other language was substituted, the Lithuanians having no written literature, they fell back upon the Hebrew, which they enlarged and improved. Wolf Jabez, Migdal ha-Meah, in Rabinowitz's *Keneset Yisrael*, i, p. 146.

it. The two Seminaries, though not the success the Government and the early Maskilim hoped they would be, turned out men of education, Hebrew and secular, who helped to disseminate the seeds of culture among the people. Of course, the men of the older generation could not but see with alarm and consternation the spread of the modern ideal. Nor did they hesitate to do everything in their power, by means of excommunication and the conscription, to stem the tide of the new ideas that threatened to overwhelm them. But they were powerless. A new era was coming, an era of peace and hope and civilization, an era of tolerance and semi-emancipation; and a new champion arose in Russian Israel, who was to do battle both with the extremists, the over-Europeanized Maskilim, and the over-Asiatic Orthodox, in behalf of a truer, broader, more tolerant Judaism. The new champion was Leon Gordon.

CHAPTER II

GORDON IN LITHUANIA

The new era of peace and emancipation was the reign of Alexander II. The Czar was a man of liberal ideas, and looked favorably upon the Jews. Not that even he ever thought that the Jews of Russia ought to be placed on a level with other Russian subjects; but he felt that the restrictive laws of his father were cruel and barbarous. None of the exceptional laws of his predecessor was abrogated or blotted from the statute books; they were merely allowed to lapse. The Czar was influenced by expediency rather than humanitarian motives. It was felt, especially after the disastrous Crimean War, that the country would go to ruin if the vast resources of the vast Empire were neglected, and the Jews, patient, frugal, and industrious, were the only ones capable of the necessary effort to insure their development. The Czar, therefore, from 1857-1865, gave to Jewish merchants of the First Guild,* as well as to artisans and men of higher

* The constitution of this privileged commercial class is curious. A Jewish merchant inside the Pale who has paid annual taxes

education, the right of residence throughout the Empire. The number of merchants of the First Guild was very small, but as the law allowed such privileged merchants to take as many Jewish clerks with them as they needed, considerable numbers of book-keepers, accountants, and superior salesmen were brought into the interior, under the obvious meaning of this permissive clause. Skilled artisans also took advantage of the law in their favor, and migrated to the interior. On the whole, somewhat less than one million Jews succeeded in gaining entrance into the interior during the reign of Alexander II.; and the police authorities, scenting liberalism in the air, did not molest even those Jews who obviously had no right of residence in the interior, merely satisfying themselves with as much blackmail money as they could conveniently obtain.

In nothing were the beneficent effects of the law

amounting to one thousand roubles for five consecutive years may then establish himself provisionally in a city of the interior. Here, for a further term of ten years, he must pay the same amount of taxes. Then his term of probation is over, and he may thereafter live in any part of the Empire. A merchant that has been a member of the Guild for twenty-five years secures for himself and his direct descendants the title of Hereditary Citizen, which assures to the posterity of its owner the right of residence in any part of the Empire. Harold Frederic, "The New Exodus," p. 93, and Professor Leo Errara, "The Russian Jews," pp. 25-26.

more plainly exhibited than in the matter of education. The Jews have been distinguished in every land and in every age for the stress they lay upon the education of the young. In Russia, at the time under consideration, they had the added incentive of securing the special privileges for their sons that are still granted to Jews that possess a higher education. "Every father," says Harold Frederic, "who now could, by doubling his own labor and self-denial, send his son to school, did so. In the case of bright and promising Jewish boys whose parents were too poor, it was a common thing for the neighbors of the village or quarter to raise a purse among themselves to send them to school." ²⁵ This statement is somewhat exaggerated, as will be seen from what follows; yet a very great number took advantage of the higher education. "Before 1886," says Professor Leo Errara,²⁶ "when the number of Jews admissible to the Universities was limited to so many per cent, there were forty-eight Jewish pupils in the higher schools out of a population of ten thousand inhabitants, against twenty-two Christian pupils among the same number of inhabitants." Their natural inclination towards learning, coupled with the incentive of special privileges, asserted itself imperatively.

This change for the better in their political and economic condition could not but effect a change in the inner life of the Jews. The class of the Maskilim, which, as we saw in the previous chapter, had begun to flourish even in the unfavorable times of Nicholas, now, encouraged by the liberal Government, asserted itself more and more. "The Government is favorably inclined towards the Jews; the restrictive laws are disregarded; special privileges are given to the educated; is it not possible that final emancipation will be granted the Russian Jews? The Czar has liberated the serfs; he has the welfare of his lowest subjects at heart; he recognizes the value of his Jewish subjects; his generosity will certainly not stop here; final emancipation is an assured fact. Hence, we must prepare ourselves for the golden future before us. We must, therefore, take advantage of the educational opportunities offered to us; we must get out of our shell, get a secular education—in a word, we must become Russians." In their eagerness for Russification, a great many of the Maskilim turned the cold shoulder to Judaism, violated Jewish customs, and ridiculed and railed at the Orthodox, who still clung tenaciously to the study of the Talmud, and refused obstinately to participate in the so-called

emancipation movement. This conduct on the part of the Maskilim made them still more obnoxious to the ultra-Orthodox, both Hasidim and Mitnaggedim, and the latter fought stubbornly against the innovations. Had the Maskilim taken a conciliatory attitude towards the Orthodox, their opposition would not have been so pronounced. As it was, they were filled with hatred and contempt for the "Berliners," as they nicknamed the Maskilim, and they barricaded themselves behind the Talmud and the Yeshibot, whither they sent their children to counteract the influence of the Maskilim.

The attitude of the Orthodox towards higher secular education may be illustrated by the following anecdote, told by a companion of his, from the life of Orshansky, a Talmudic student, who had gone to Charkov to attend the University. "On a winter night of 1864, after the evening prayer, our teacher entered the Yeshibah, crestfallen, sad, and disconsolate. Restlessly he walked to and fro, and sighed continually. Never before had we seen our teacher so downhearted and sad; but we did not dare ask him the cause of it. After a while he turned to us, and said, 'Have you heard the terrible misfortune that has happened?' 'What has happened, and to whom?' we asked tremblingly. 'To

Elijah Orshansky!’ ‘To Orshansky!’ we exclaimed, jumping up from our seats. ‘Is he dead? Is he mortally sick?’ ‘No,’ our teacher answered, ‘but he is taken from us forever; he has gone to Charkov to the University, and the glory of Judaism is departed forever.’²⁷ From the Orthodox point of view, the attendance of a Jewish student at the University was a calamity.” *

Meanwhile, struggling Hebrew literature assumed a new form. The Maskilim, bending all their energies towards the enlightenment of the minds of their Orthodox brethren, established a press as a means for propaganda. In 1857 *Ha-Maggid* was founded by Silberman. In 1860 the *Karmel* began to appear in Wilna under the editor-

* Another anecdote is told by Gordon himself (Luah Ahiasaf, 1898, pp. 81-91): At the age of thirteen, while studying the Talmud one day in the house of a well-known Talmudist, Gordon brought with him a copy of a Hebrew poem written by his brother-in-law, Michael Gordon. The Talmudist surprised him while in the act of reading it. “What have you there?” asked the zealot, and seized the paper. Seeing the poem, he struck the boy on the cheek twice, shouting: “You good-for-nothing! How dare you bring such an abomination into my house!” Gordon learned later on from his teacher that that very Talmudist had had his eye on him (Gordon) with a view to giving him his daughter in marriage, but the fatal poem destroyed all his chances, for which, Gordon adds, he was extremely grateful to the poem.

ship of Samuel Joseph Fuenn; in 1861 the first issue of Ha-Meliz came out in Odessa, edited by Alexander Zederbaum, and in 1862 Ha-Zefirah, by Slonimsky. Ha-Maggid was at first merely a newspaper, the editor was a man of mediocre ability, who could not even write Hebrew correctly, and aimed at nothing higher than telling the news of the world. All the contributors to this paper were literary dilettanti, who liked to see their names in print, and reported, in grandiloquent style, the petty occurrences in their respective towns.²⁸ But the Karmel, the Meliz and the Zefirah were originally founded for the purpose of spreading the Haskalah among the people, and they not only surpassed Ha-Maggid in language and style, but also in matter. Yet Ha-Maggid had accomplished one great good. It had created a class of readers. And now, when the new papers appeared, the readers created by Ha-Maggid received them with delight. Around these three papers gathered all the Hebrew writers that felt themselves called upon to speak to their people in behalf of the Haskalah. Foremost among these young writers, the "Lion of the Company," as he was styled, was Leon, or Jehudah Löb Gordon.

The destined leader of the Haskalah was born

in Wilna, Thursday, December 7, 1830 (21 Kis-lew, 5591).^{*} The son of a well-to-do inn-keeper, he spent his young days in plenty, even in opulence; and as he showed marked ability, his ambitious father intended him for the Rabbinate, and gave him the usual Rabbinical education. As good luck would have it, his teacher, Rabbi Lippman, was not of the ordinary run of Melammedim. He had been, in his younger days, a disciple of Elijah Wilna, and later of Rabbi Hayyim, of Volozin, and had imbibed their critical spirit, and adopted

^{*} According to Gordon himself (in his manuscript *Al-Nebar Kebar*) his father Asher (1790-1855) took the surname Gordon in 1818, when, by order of the Government, every Jew was compelled to adopt a family name. It came to him from his mother's side; though H. N. Steinschneider traces the direct genealogy of the name several generations back on his father's side. (See *Ha-Meliz*, 1902, nos. 218 and 241.) "The name of Gordon is common in Scotland and France, the Scotch Gordons dating their ancestry back to the end of the twelfth century. The etymology of the word is uncertain, some tracing it to *Gordonia*, a city in Macedon; others to *gore-down*, referring to a yeoman, Adam, who, in the reign of Malcolm III., killed a wild boar that was the terror of the country, in commemoration of which he was knighted, and allowed to assume the surname of Goredown. The name is common in Russia, possibly through the Scottish Gordons of Aberdeen, who settled in Russia and in Poland in the seventeenth century, some of whom held important commissions in the Russian army and navy" ("Notes and Queries," 9th series, vol. ix). To trace Gordon from Grodno or Jordan is too far-fetched.

their methods of education. He taught his young pupil first the Pentateuch with a simple commentary, then the Prophets in order, and gave him instruction also in grammar. After he had mastered the Bible, his teacher introduced him to the Talmud, which he had nearly completed at the age of fifteen.²⁹ "At this time," to use his own words, "my eyes were opened, to realize that this [the study of the Talmud] was not the way to lead us to our goal. I realized that I was an Asiatic in the heart of enlightened Europe. . . . Then I began to study Hebrew grammar, and the Russian, Polish, German, and French languages, and other branches of knowledge, without the help of a teacher."³⁰ He was moved to the new course by the spirit of the Haskalah, which was very strong in Wilna, the metropolis of Jewish learning. Besides, he was perhaps indirectly influenced by his brother-in-law, Michael Gordon,³¹ a Maskil and a Yiddish poet. Of his relations to the latter, he says: "His residence among us, *ipso facto*, made me afterwards join the Maskilim, who knew and used to visit him. He, on the contrary, was jealous of me personally, and endeavored to dissuade me from my ambition of becoming a Hebrew poet."³² About this time his father grew poor, and young

Gordon was thrown on his own resources; and after two years' preparation and study of Russian literature and other branches, he obtained, in 1853, an appointment as teacher of Jewish children in the Government school of Poniviez, Kovno, and was perforce thrown into the conflict between the Haskalah and Orthodoxy.

As was intimated above, the Jews looked with distrust upon everything undertaken by Nicholas I. with reference to themselves, and they viewed with especial apprehension the numerous schools the Czar had established for Jewish children, on account of Nicholas's well-known proselytizing designs. The teachers of these Government schools were regarded by the multitude as aiders and abettors in the conspiracy of conversion. Hence Gordon's accepting a position as teacher in a Government school was considered tantamount to a challenge of war, and Gordon himself threw down the gauntlet. In the nineteen years he taught school (1853-1861 in Poniviez; 1861-1865 in Shavly, and 1865-1872 as curator, or school supervisor, in Tels) he never flinched from his duty, though residence in the small towns was repugnant to him. In a letter written April 13, 1866, he says:

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"Both Poniviez and Tels are small towns, mere clusters of huts, in which you can find neither writers nor scholars, nor even intelligent people. The inhabitants are mostly given to business, and absorbed in superstition; all are sunk in a lethargy which no spirit of the time can dispel. And should a man with open eyes chance among them, he will find no rest; the fanatics embitter his life."³³

Again, in a letter of March 16, 1867, he writes:

"The people here may be divided into four classes: a) learned idiots, oxen that lick the grass on one side of the mountain, not knowing that a green, pleasant field is stretched out on the other side; b) pious idiots, who observe all the minutiae of the law without studying them; c) intelligent idiots, who allow themselves a certain latitude in their religious life, because they have heard somebody say that it is permitted; and d) plain idiots."³⁴

No wonder that such an environment was not attractive to a man of Gordon's temperament. Moreover, the obscurantists of Tels were not pleased with the conduct of his school, because he made the children speak Russian, and opened a department for girls! They denounced him to the director, curator, governor, and governor-general, for spreading atheism among their children, and similar charges. The fanatics were desperate, because they felt that they were powerless to cope with the Haskalah.³⁵ Gordon, however, persisted

in his course, undaunted by the attacks of his enemies, and he succeeded in lifting the load of superstition from the shoulders of the younger generation, with whom he came in immediate contact.

But Gordon was not satisfied with this activity in a narrow sphere. He had a message to the whole people, and he threw himself heart and soul into the work before him. The press, which had been organized lately, particularly the Karmel and the Meliz, raised the new literature at one bound from an undefined, lifeless mass into a living, compact organism. The new literature had a mission, to enlighten the people and improve their condition. All the Maskilim flocked about the two papers, and Gordon, in particular, was welcomed with open arms. His fame was spreading. His first poetic work, Ahabat David u-Michal, which appeared in 1857, placed him at once at the head of the new literature. He was recognized as the great poet of whom the people were deeply in need. His vast, comprehensive store of knowledge of the Hebrew literature of all times marked him as a scholar, and his keen, incisive style, and the purity and force of his diction, became a subject of comment and imitation. "The Polish Jews are exceedingly fond of lofty rhetoric and elevated

style, noble expressions and strong enthusiasm; for this reason the young generation, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, admired Schiller so much.”⁸⁶ Gordon possessed the above characteristics in an eminent degree. He was, therefore, easily recognized as the leader of the new literature.

He aimed chiefly at purifying Judaism, at removing the mass of superstitious practices that clogged the development of Russian Jews along the line of progress, material and intellectual.

“Our material improvement depends upon religious reform,” he says. “Our people live on air; the new generation is brought up in the Heder under idiotic and ignorant teachers; the Rabbis busy themselves with hairsplitting studies that are absolutely worthless, and pay no regard whatever to the needs of the people. Shall such conditions remain as they are? Do they need no improvement? . . . We must not stand by idle! It is the duty of every one that has the interests of his people at heart to fight against such conditions. All the ‘fences around the law’ might have been necessary at the time they were instituted, but they are superfluous to-day. I do not believe in destroying all memories of the past with which the life of our people is bound up, or in giving up hope of a future. . . . I seek the golden mean: to unite pure faith with reason and the needs of the time. Only by an orderly system of education, combining secular knowledge with Judaism and the love of our people, can we prepare ourselves for better days.”⁸⁷

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"Faith not based on understanding is worse than atheism. Every day you reiterate your belief in the coming of the Messiah; but you that await his miraculous arrival daily, and the German reformers that disregard the prayer for his advent, alike deny the great principle. Miracles do not happen every day. The recital of the prayer is merely mechanical; you don't think of what you say. Suppose the Messiah does come; what good can he expect from you? From among the educated Jews he can appoint his officers, physicians, secretaries, etc. But what can you accomplish with your Pilpulistic arguments, and the study of the Maharshah? Will you become the lawgivers, and re-establish the 'four corporal' and other punishments, for the least violation of the most insignificant practices? Will not other nations rise against you and destroy you in one day? . . . No, my friends, you must prepare the younger generation for the coming of the Messiah, which, however, can happen only in a natural way. You must change your system of education. Give the intelligent that useful education in secular knowledge which a modern man must possess. Teach trades and occupations to those who are not capable of study. Teach our merchants to be scrupulously honest in their dealings both with Jews and non-Jews; institute order in the conduct of your communal affairs; eradicate from the hearts of the young the hatred towards other religions and their adherents. Then the hope of Israel may be realized; then the world will see that we are not opposed to knowledge, and freedom will be given to us to develop along the lines of our own genius, and we shall be able to enrich all mankind, by bringing into play the gifts of the intellect with which God has endowed us. Only by good deeds can we gain the friendship of mankind." ³⁸

Such were the sentiments and ideas of Gordon. Couched in the forcible and impressive style he was master of, they could not but impress his readers. This note of conciliation and petition is characteristic of Gordon. Nevertheless, he was abused by his opponents, especially by a certain Moses David Wolfsohn (supposed to be Zechariah Joseph Stern, Rabbi of Shavly) in the periodical *Ha-Lebanon*, who heaped upon him personally the most disgraceful epithets. Gordon scorned such methods of criticism. "Let our writing be based on absolute truth, and we shall succeed. Truth is the most dangerous weapon against falsehood."³⁹ He ignored the slander of the critic. Then the enemies of the *Haskalah* issued a pamphlet, *Milhamah be-Shalom*, directed against him and Lilienblum, to which they responded in another pamphlet, *Deme Milhamah be-Shalom* (1870). They denied the accusation that their main object was to overthrow the Rabbinate, and thus destroy Judaism. No, all they wanted was to force reforms upon them, proving at the same time the crying need of reform in Rabbinical Judaism.

His attitude towards the Rabbis is one of bitter antagonism. He can never forgive them for their indifference towards the needs of the time, and

their obstinate refusal of any reforms whatever, and he lays all the misfortune of the Jews and their ignorance of the world at the door of the Rabbis. In the heat of his war upon ignorance, he uses the shafts of his sarcasm unsparingly against Rabbis and Talmudic teachers, the latter the product of the former. Thus, for instance, in his satire *Barburim Abusim*, he ridicules the tendencies of the Rabbis to interpret the ritual laws in the most rigorous sense. A poor woman bought two turkeys in the winter, and pampered them up to the time of Pesah, and thought with delight of the good times she and her numerous family would have during the festival week; how she would sell part of the meat to her rich neighbor, and with the proceeds buy Mazzot and wine for her family, and how she would use the unsold part for her children, and what a general good time they would have. The turkeys were slaughtered accordingly on Pesah eve. Unfortunately, a red spot was found on the œsophagus of each bird. Frightened, she ran to the Rabbi. Although there was no blood or any perforation, the Rabbi declared them Trefah, because "the œsophagus may have been perforated and may have healed"; and the poor woman remained without food for the holidays. The poet consoles

her in her misfortune caused by the "mercilessness of the Rabbis," with the words: "You must not despair, poor woman! Jews are charitable; you can support yourself by begging."⁴⁰

Again, he ridicules the Rabbis for their partiality in interpreting the laws in their own favor. Thus, in *Ha-Peh she-Osar hu ha-Peh she-Hittir* "he tells the following anecdote: A crime was committed by a Jewish young man—he violated the Sabbath by carrying a watch in his vest-pocket. The Rabbi was incensed at the transgressor, when he heard of it. "A watch is a vessel," he said, "and must not be carried on Sabbath." He ordered the culprit before him for punishment, as a warning to other transgressors. When the sinner appeared, he beheld his own son. The Rabbi stroked his beard for some time, and then said: "Well, on the other hand, a watch is also an ornament, and it is therefore permitted to carry it on Sabbath." The culprit was released.

In his novelette, *Kaf Regel Egel*,⁴¹ he tells of a Rabbi who, on a certain Sabbath morning, declared all the meat *Trefah* at the instigation of his wife, incensed because she had not succeeded in getting the portion of veal she liked. Exaggerated and ridiculous as the above-quoted stories seem to be,

there is a great deal of truth in them. The Rabbis insisted upon the observance of the most trifling minutiae of the law, and caused a great deal of inconvenience and discomfort by their rigorous decisions. Still, Gordon's charges of partiality in judgment, and interpretation of the law for selfish ends, are unjust. The Rabbis, narrow-minded and unyielding with regard to the law, were the most scrupulous of men. Whatever may be said against them, they were sincere and honest. Of course, the satirist, for the purpose of showing to what absurd lengths stickling for the letter of the law will lead, selected the most extreme and impossible cases; but they must not be taken as characteristic. Gordon is likewise unjust in holding the Rabbis responsible for the misfortune of the Jews.

It is undoubtedly true that, had the Rabbis been men of a more practical turn of mind, and of a character ready to steer with the wind, Judaism would have been freed from some of its objectionable features, the result of isolation. But, then, the Rabbis themselves were the product of the historical forces that have made Judaism what it is. They were the result rather than the cause of Jewish isolation. After all, what would have become of Judaism, during so many ages of persecution,

had the Rabbis been more yielding, and removed the fences from around the law? With the least breath of freedom, many Jews were ready to throw off the restraints Judaism placed upon them and become traitors to their brethren. Could the Rabbis have sanctioned such action? Gordon himself acknowledged it. In an undated letter he says: “

“After all, the complaints of the ultra-Orthodox against the Haskalah and the Maskilim are not without ground, though not for the reasons assigned by them. To our sorrow we must realize that the culture we are striving after will make us drink gall, and produce thistles instead of flowers. We lament, not because of the customs neglected, or the ‘fences’ broken down, or the burden of practices and observances thrown off; but because the unruly waters have reached to the very soul of our religion; and a sharp sword lies at the very throat of our faith and its existence. A true Haskalah, like that of Saadia, Maimonides, and Mendelssohn, is very scarce among us; an imaginary, destructive Haskalah prevails. The Maskilim have taken the shell of civilization and dressed themselves in it for appearances sake; but the kernel they have thrown away. They combine the unpleasant traits of the places they left and of those whither they go; they are not particular about religious commandments, and have no scruples about adopting even the practices that have given Israel his unenviable reputation among the Gentiles. The Maskilim of the better sort are truly educated men, but they are traitors, and they are ashamed of their race.”

Were not the Rabbis justified in opposing a movement that tended to produce such a progeny?

Gordon, however, had a theory of his own, founded on an historical basis, with regard to the tendency to go to extremes. He says: “

“The struggle between the old and the new that is going on in our midst now is the result of a natural development. A person accustomed to a certain line of conduct, or given to one extreme, who desires to habituate himself to the mean, goes first to the opposite extreme, until the two extremes are united, and he returns to the golden mean [Maimonides]. The tendency of the present generation towards the extreme of modern civilization is a natural result of the former tendency towards the extreme of religiousness, and there is hope that in the end the extremists will return and meet on common ground. Our religion even in its first, its Mosaic, form did not strike root in the hearts of our people in one generation. ‘The Book and the Sword were always wrapped together.’ Many generations and centuries passed, and not without wars and confusion, before Israel removed the strange gods from his midst. Many generations and centuries passed also after that, not without schisms and dissensions, until the Mosaic became the Jewish religion, and until the Rabbinic law spread and became an integral part of Judaism. We who were born many ages after these struggles and revolutions, and who try to lead a peaceful life, are disturbed when we see that the age of excommunication has returned, and the struggle has been renewed. The days of disorder may be prolonged; but the spirit of God, which has been with us ever since the beginning of our history, will finally produce a substance

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solid and perfect out of these mixed elements. The useless ingredients will disappear, and the solid and living matter will survive, and form the foundation of the new, improved world."

But in order to bring about the "golden mean" it was necessary first to combat superstition and ignorance, to remove the weeds that had grown all over the vineyard of the Lord, and which the Rabbis guarded as carefully as though they formed part and parcel of the vineyard. Hence his fight against the Rabbis. When the opposite tendency manifested itself, Gordon was again in the van to combat it, too, in order to prepare the way for the golden mean in the end.

CHAPTER III

GORDON IN ST. PETERSBURG

The decade from 1860-1870 was momentous in the development of the Haskalah, and its champions carried the day. The new liberal policy of the Government with regard to the Jews, and the constant call of the Maskilim upon their brethren, to rise from their long sleep, had helped, to a considerable extent, to Europeanize the Russian Jews. The spirit of the West was wafted even into the Yeshibot, the bulwark of Rabbinism, and removed thence the most promising Talmudic students. Ha-Meliz and Ha-Zefirah, through their columns filled with the masterly feuilletons of Gordon as well as his more serious articles, and those of his fellow-champions, opened their eyes.

It must be borne in mind, in order to understand the great influence these papers wielded, especially upon the Talmudic students, that any books except the Codes and the folio volumes of the Talmud, were strictly interdicted in the Yeshibot. The interdict sufficed to invest all other literature with

heightened charm. Stolen waters taste sweet. The above papers were smuggled into the Rabbinical schools, and their contents were eagerly absorbed. A new world was presented to the Talmudic students—a world of intellect pictured in the most glowing colors. Eager for information as most of them were, this presentation of an unlimited sphere of knowledge outside of the Talmud inflamed their imagination, and they began to study secular subjects. In the dead of night, when all the students and the proctors had retired to rest, the newly-awakened spirits would steal into the women's division of the synagogue, and there, under the flickering light of a wax candle, would pore over *Ha-Meliz* and *Ha-Zefirah*, a Hebrew grammar, or a Russian and German book, till the footsteps of the early risers would warn them that dawn was near, and they would then retire to their beds on the benches of the synagogue, and rise with the others as if nothing had happened. The choicer spirits, who could be trusted, would communicate with each other, and secret societies of the *Maskilim* were organized. In the daytime, in order to avoid suspicion, they would rock diligently over their folio volumes, to the usual sing-song, thinking perhaps in the meantime of some poem or satire of

Gordon's that had appeared lately in one of the periodicals, and they would chuckle with secret satisfaction at the thought of the wry face the superintendent would make, were he to know in what studies they had indulged the previous night. Not infrequently the big folio volume served as a receptacle for some interdicted little book in Russian or German, which the student perused under the cloak of Talmud study.

These subterfuges would be practised for a time, until some fine day the Yeshibah would be startled by the announcement that the best and most diligent "arm-Bahur" had become a student of the Gymnasium. A search in all the desks for dangerous books would then follow; some students would save themselves by making away with the interdicted books in their possession. Those who were discovered with anything that savored of the Haskalah would be expelled from the school, and were thus, *ipso facto*, thrown, as it were, into the ranks of the Maskilim. The Talmudic students' eager perusal of Ha-Meliz taught them Hebrew, and not a few of these exiled Talmudists became good writers later on, and worked for the spread of the Haskalah.

In 1869 a new champion of the cause of the

Haskalah appeared in the shape of Ha-Shahar, a monthly by Peter Smolensky. The editor was a man of pronounced literary ability, with a ready pen and an incisive mind; above all, he was a fearless, independent thinker. He aimed at making his magazine a purely literary organ, in the European sense. Smolensky possessed a winning personality, and succeeded in gathering around his magazine the most talented Hebrew writers. The literary character of Ha-Shahar was dignified. It contained scientific articles full of interest and instruction. The contributors to its columns preached reforms in Judaism, and called upon their people "to leave the intellectual Ghetto and participate in universal culture."⁴⁵ Its popularity was immense. Every new issue was anticipated with eagerness and impatience, and read and re-read, until its contents were known almost by heart. This magazine also was circulated among the Talmud students, and did even more effective work among them than the weeklies mentioned above.

Gordon, recognizing the beneficent influence of Ha-Shahar, affiliated himself with it from its very beginning. He contributed willingly, even eagerly, his best and longest poems to its columns, which tended to make Ha-Shahar still more popular. His

contributions were all freewill offerings. He wrote in order to rouse his people to the reality of modern life, and Ha-Shahar was a worthy vehicle for his thoughts.

Ha-Shahar marked a new departure in the development of the Haskalah. The decade from 1860 to 1870, as we have shown, had seen the new awakening. In a letter written in 1864, Gordon says:

"In the majority of Jewish cities our brethren are still walking in darkness, but withal the rays of the sun are beginning to penetrate among them, too. In 1850 I remember a certain Jewish student who did not dare walk through the streets in his uniform. He would leave it with the janitor of the Gymnasium, to which he used to come in his 'Kosher' garments and long earlocks, and only when he was safe inside the Gymnasium building would he comb his hair, put his locks behind his ears, don his uniform, and become another man. To-day you will find many a Jewish youth writing good Russian, or German, or French—all the product of the last ten years."⁴⁶

By 1870 the number of Europeanized Jews was considerably augmented. Unfortunately, the tide of reform once having set in, it could not be stemmed easily. The Europeanized Jews, in their eagerness to become so, neglected and endeavored to forget their Judaism. The young generation, getting a thoroughly Russian education, no longer

studied Hebrew; and the true Maskilim realized, with alarm, that their efforts to wean the youth from the useless Rabbinical studies, had weaned them from Judaism as well. Gordon and Smolensky appreciated the danger and undertook to cope with it. Both directed their efforts towards bringing the young, extreme Maskilim back into the fold. They endeavored to unite Jewish feeling with European culture; "or, in the words of Gordon, unite a "Jewish heart with a human head." "Smolensky, writing Hebrew only, began to preach nationalism, an ideal that appealed strongly to the old as well as the young generation. Gordon, on the other hand, when writing Hebrew never spared his people. "I think it harmful and dangerous to flatter my people when I write Hebrew," he said. He always called attention to faults, abuses, and bad practices. It may safely be said that the people like censure when inflicted skilfully and cleverly. But Gordon, in order to reach the Russianized Jews that read Hebrew no longer, wrote in Russian also. In this case, however, his policy was different. Here he tried to show the nobility of Judaism, and the purity of motive underlying it. He defended his people against all false allegations and accusations, and upheld the dignity of the Jew-

ish character. In a letter to Frishman (May, 1885), he says:

"You know that besides my Hebrew writings I wrote a great deal in Russian, too. In the Russian articles, whenever I touched upon the Jewish question, I was very careful not to criticise my people, in order not to give our enemies the least pretext. I look upon my quarrel with my own people as a family affair, in which no outsider should interfere. On the other hand, in my Russian writings I always defend our people, even to the extent of calling down upon myself the wrath of the anti-Semites, as in my polemic with Brafman in the *Golos* in 1876, and with the *Golos* itself, in 1872. I even heard that many of the upper classes with whom I came in contact wondered whether I was really an enlightened man or a fanatic like others." 40

Such a double policy may prove dangerous; by duplicity a man may lose both sides. But Gordon's motives were too pure, too unselfish to be suspected. The Orthodox were grateful to him for defending their cause, and, by appealing to their pride, he inspired his Russianized Jewish readers with feelings of love and loyalty to their brethren.

A new field of activity presented itself to Gordon, when, in 1872, he was called to St. Petersburg to take the office of Secretary of the Jewish Community, and of the Society for the Spread of the Haskalah. The Jewish community in St. Petersburg was one of the largest in the Empire, but be-

fore Gordon's arrival, owing to its lack of organization, its affairs were in a state of confusion. The communal board had charge of all Jewish institutions, synagogues, schools, hospitals, and charities. Gordon, as its Secretary, brought order into every department. He introduced decorum in the synagogues, and reforms in all other branches of communal affairs.

Of special importance was the influence he exercised upon the Society for the Spread of the *Has-kalah*, of which, also, he was the Secretary. The society was organized in 1861, for the purpose of disseminating culture among Russian Jews. At the head of the movement stood Baron Horace Günzburg, and the richest and most cultured Jews from all over the Empire belonged to it. Elijah Harkavy and Leon Rosenthal were its leading spirits. The society established a stipendiary fund for indigent Jewish students, encouraged and supported Jewish writers of merit, and, in general, watched over the intellectual welfare of Russian Jewry. Through his connection with this society, Gordon came in daily contact with the most intellectual and influential Jews, and used his power in furthering the interests of Hebrew literature. Hebrew authors turned to him with requests for support, and

as soon as he recognized the value of a certain work, he did not rest until the society took up its publication. He likewise helped a great many former Talmudic students, who had come to St. Petersburg to get an education, by obtaining for them a stipend from the funds of the society. Gordon, recognizing the unreliability of former translations, by Christians, was also instrumental in the publication of a Pentateuch translation into Russian by the society (1874). In this way he became the intermediary between the Jews of the Pale and those of the capital, and the mouthpiece of Russian Jewry in their communication with their brethren of other countries.

The seven years from 1872 to 1879 were the fullest of Gordon's life. The immense amount of business connected with his office furnished enough work for two men; but Gordon did it all alone in the most scrupulous and efficient manner. Busy though he was, he still managed to find time to continue his literary work, both in Hebrew and in Russian. Almost all that he wrote during those years was contributed to Ha-Shahar and Ha-Meliz. For Ha-Shahar he wrote poems, and for Ha-Meliz humorous sketches and feuilletons under the heading of Aleh Niddaf, which were read with delight

by the thousands of readers of *Ha-Meliz*. This activity must have been extremely agreeable to him; he was a hard worker by nature. His daily contact with the *élite* of the capital must also have been very pleasant to him, especially by contrast with his association with ignorant and superstitious men and women, with whom he had spent the best nineteen years of his life.

But his peace of mind and the congenial activity were not to last long. He does not seem to have been very popular with the young people of the capital. His strong, unyielding nature was not agreeable to them. They accused him of a desire of domineering and catering to the rich.⁵⁰ His unpopularity was so marked that in 1874, when, at the request of the Government, a conference of Jewish representatives met at St. Petersburg to discuss the Jewish question, Gordon was not invited to the banquet given by the young men in honor of the delegates.⁵¹ Soon a controversy broke out in the Jewish community over the election of a Rabbi. Two candidates were in the field.⁵² Gordon sided with one, his opponents with the other. To get rid of Gordon's opposition, some of the followers of the second candidate denounced Gordon to the Government as a Nihilist.⁵³ At two in the

morning, on the Sabbath before Passover of the year 1879 (March 18), the police swooped down upon his house, searched all his papers, and carried him and his wife to the Lithuanian Citadel, where they were kept in close confinement for six weeks. On the third of May, he and his wife, accompanied by gendarmes, were banished to Petrozavodsk in the province of Olonetz in northwestern Russia, where they stopped eight days. Then they were ordered to live in the suburb of Pudosh. Of course, the charges proved false, and they were allowed to return to St. Petersburg on August 16, one hundred days after their exile.⁵⁴

This outrage on Gordon caused a sensation throughout Russian Jewry, and especially in the capital. It seems, though, that his former friends did nothing to bring about his release.⁵⁵ The latter years of the reign of Alexander II. were days of confusion and disturbance. The Nihilists were exceedingly active; the police suspected everybody of conspiracy. In fact, no man trusted another. Brother suspected brother, and a friend his friend. This is said in extenuation of the conduct of the prominent Jews of St. Petersburg. They may have feared that their exertions in behalf of one suspected of Nihilism might cast suspicions on them-

selves. Fortunately, Gordon's own brother, and his son-in-law, Max Kaplan, were prominent lawyers in the capital, and they succeeded in bringing about his release. But the whole affair could not but cast gloom over Gordon, usually so optimistic. In a letter, written from his exile, to Zeëb Kaplan,⁵⁶ his lifelong friend, the father of his son-in-law, he says with bitter sarcasm:⁵⁷

"Perhaps, after all, it was for the best. In the course of my life success crowned my efforts. . . . From a low station in life I worked my way up to a high position, and sat in the councils of Jewish great men. I had some part in the 'Crown of the Torah,' some part in the 'Crown of Greatness,' and through my son-in-law (a Kohen) also some part in the 'Crown of the Priesthood'. . . . I lacked only the 'Crown of Martyrdom' and God gave me that, too."

In an article, "Retrogression not Progress," as well as in another letter to Kaplan,⁵⁸ in which he concludes that the Jews are going backward instead of forward, he refers to his own affair as a case in point.

"My latest experience," he says, "is one of the proofs that we are retrograding. Time was when the Haskalah made progress, truth sprouted from the earth, and superstition was hushed. Now it is the reverse. The blind crawl out of their holes and presume to lead. The Rabbinical Seminaries are closed, because

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Rabbi Samuel Mohilev requested the Ministry to close them; the Rabbinical conference is busying itself with nonsense. Gordon is put out of the way, that his opponents may carry their point. The Maskilim are silent, because it is an evil time."

In the meanwhile his position had been given to another, and his means of support were thus withdrawn. This circumstance naturally added to his disappointment. But Gordon did not despair long. His forced absence had extinguished the hatred which the younger men felt against him. The Günzburgs and Poliakovs assured him of their sympathy and aid. Hebrew writers all over the country congratulated him upon his freedom, and looked upon him as a martyr. His friends wanted him to occupy his former position as Secretary, but he refused to take it. He supported himself by teaching the sons of Baron Günzburg and by literary labors, chiefly in Russian, in the *Voskhod*.

In the days of his gloom Gordon thought that he had been completely forgotten by his people, and that all his labors in the field of Hebrew literature had been in vain. Under the spell of these sombre impressions he writes to Kaplan (Nov. 13, 1879) :

"You say, 'Bestir thyself for the sake of thy love for our holy tongue, and for its history, on the pages of which thy name will sparkle like a star'. . . . Poor innocent! Do you really

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expect the names of our writers to shine like stars, and not to vanish like meteors or will-o'-the-wisps? Do you not see that a thick cloud hangs over the language and its writers, to darken and destroy them? Where are those who are to write the history of our time, and to plant there new heavens and new stars? Can't you foretell the future? Sadducees busying themselves with Hellenistic philosophy, and Pharisees, with useless nonsense! Such are the Jewish classes of the future. Who of them will point out the new stars you are speaking of? Why do you persuade yourself to believe the false notion that my name will live forever?"⁵⁹

But he was soon to realize the strong hold he had upon the affection of the cultured classes of his people. On October 8, 1881, twenty-five years were completed from the time Gordon's first poem, *Ahabat David u-Michal*, appeared, and the Maskilim all over Russia determined to celebrate this occasion and show Gordon that he was understood and appreciated. The *élite* of St. Petersburg gave a great banquet in his honor; he was presented with a golden pen and a loving-cup; telegrams arrived from Jewish towns in Russia to the number of hundreds. Gordon awoke to a new reality. The consciousness that his work had so far not been in vain cheered him, and urged him to continue his efforts to bring enlightenment to his people, and to strengthen and build up Hebrew literature.

In 1880 he became the unofficial editor of Ha-Meliz, and he instituted beneficent reforms in its conduct, for which he gained the gratitude of all Hebrew writers.⁶⁰ It must be borne in mind that while newspapers in other languages are not considered literary in the full sense of the word, and would not be taken as models of style, the Hebrew newspapers were the only school in which Jewish writers acquired their literary training. For an entire generation Ha-Meliz was the only literary tribunal. Unfortunately, for many years it was in incompetent hands. The editor, Alexander Zederbaum, looked upon the articles contributed to its columns as his private property. He took all sorts of liberties with them, distorted them, and shortened or lengthened them at pleasure. Often a writer could not recognize his own article. The editor sometimes inserted personal abuse against his enemies in articles contributed by their friends, and actually changed their thoughts to suit himself. It must be acknowledged that Zederbaum sometimes published articles in Ha-Meliz that were opposed to his own interests; and, when the public good demanded it, he spared neither the rich nor the Rabbis, to whom he usually catered. But it is also true that he used the paper for his own per-

sonal aggrandizement, and praised himself and his achievements *ad nauseam*.

The announcement that Gordon was to be the editor of Ha-Meliz was, therefore, hailed with delight by a host of Hebrew writers. Gordon set himself immediately to correct the abuses. The young writers looked up to him as the leader of Hebrew literature, and the mere fact that his name was connected with the paper inspired them with confidence. Therefore, when Gordon issued a circular to the Hebrew writers, calling upon them to work with him in Ha-Meliz, every one responded cheerfully. When, in 1885, he became official co-editor with Zederbaum, with the permission of the Government, one of the conditions he made with Zederbaum was that he be given the right to invite any writer he pleased, and pay him for his services, a condition that was quite new. The acquisition of good writers changed the literary aspect of Ha-Meliz. The improvement was marked, not only in what Gordon published, but also in what he did not publish. He never allowed personalities to stain the columns of the paper. He was very conscientious about manuscripts submitted to him; he either published or returned them—an unheard-of thing; formerly, correspondents had waited for months to

know the fate of their articles. He never took any liberties with the contents of an article, and by personal appeal encouraged those in whom he discovered literary ability.

As the writer of the "leaders," Gordon naturally had to deal with the great problems that confronted the Jews of Russia at the time. The burning question was Zionism, or, rather, Palestine colonization. The accession of Alexander III., in 1881, and the riots which followed upon the heels of that event, threw the Jews into a state of confusion. The dreams of final emancipation inspired by the liberality of Alexander II. had become less assured in the latter years of his reign, when, on account of the activity of the Nihilists, he was forced into reactionary measures. But Alexander III. and the riots crushed all Jewish hopes with one fell blow. Alexander III. was a despot and a narrow-minded fanatic, and the Jews felt instinctively, even before his accession, that nothing was to be expected from him. The outrages upon the Jews in Yalta, Elisabetgrad, and Nicolaiev only confirmed their suspicions.

What was to be done? The Jews must emigrate. But whither? This was the burning question. America or Palestine? Palestine was the

more ideal place of the two. Smolensky had constantly been advocating nationalism and Palestine colonization, had clothed them in the most ideal garb, and stirred up public opinion on the subject. He became still more active in the movement after the riots of 1881, and the Zionistic, colonizing, non-political movement was started. Gordon, as an editor, naturally had to deal with this all-important question. In Ha-Meliz he appeared as an outspoken nationalist and Zionist; but we must acknowledge, with Brainin, that Gordon added not a single new thought to the question. The complexity of the movement bewildered him. He did not perceive its historic or political bearing. And because he did not have a comprehensive notion of the question, he wavered, hesitated, and was swayed one way and another.

But it must be acknowledged that Gordon had reason for his wavering. In their paroxysm of rage at the wrongs perpetrated upon their brethren, and in the first flush of their enthusiasm for Zion, the two great advocates of the new movement, Smolensky and M. L. Lilienblum, had gone to the extreme of preaching narrow nationalism and hatred of Europe and European culture. The Haskalah had done no good to the Jews, they held, and

Europe did not sympathize with them. The Jews, therefore, should return to Palestine, establish a Government according to the Jewish spirit—a theocracy—and ignore European culture completely. Such were the sentiments of Smolensky and Lilienblum. Gordon could not possibly subscribe to these ideas. All his life he had waged war against superstition and narrow-mindedness, had advocated culture and religious reform. Should he now, under the influence of disappointment, undo with one stroke that to which he had devoted a lifetime? The choosing of the golden mean was characteristic of Gordon. He loved his people, he was a nationalist, but not to the extreme of despising every other nation with its culture. Moreover, Gordon, like every well-informed man, dreaded the idea of combining temporal with ecclesiastic authority, and his hatred of the Rabbis was too pronounced for him not to shudder at the thought of entrusting a Government to their hands.

“As long as the Rabbis have the upper hand, it will be impossible for Jews to establish an independent Government. Woe unto us, if the Government falls into the hands of Rabbi Joshua Diskin [of Brest-Litovsk and later Rabbi of Jerusalem] and his wife, with the Shulhan Aruk as the national constitution come into force again! Even when the political power is not vested

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in them, the Rabbis rule with an iron hand; how much more when Reb Lippele becomes a chief of police, and Reb Chatzkele a gendarme. Can we deny that Judaism, in its present state, is opposed to all culture? In my younger years I also dreamed such a dream, but I realize now that Jewish persecution is worse than Gentile persecution. It is not enough to look upon this question from its national aspect; the religious side, too, is of the utmost importance. Since it is impossible to move the Rabbis to any religious reforms, would God that no temporal power fall into their hands." ⁶¹

His distrust of the Rabbis he gives expression to in another letter:

"Had I believed that such a thing [colonization of Palestine by Jews] could be realized, I should have devoted my life to stir up our philanthropists to come to the assistance of Montefiore; for I see in this movement the cornerstone of the rebuilding of our nation. A successful colony in Palestine, a family of Jews engaged in agriculture, may be the beginning of a national resurrection. But I do not believe in such a possibility. I believe that the Samaritans of to-day will interrupt the work at the beginning, and the foxes that lie in the ruins will not allow us to rebuild them, lest they be disturbed in their lairs." ⁶²

"The perpetuation of the nation, and the deliverance of Israel are sacred to me, too, and perhaps more so than to those who make a great deal of noise. I will not destroy the inheritance of the Lord, and will not keep back the redemption. But I will not retrograde. I will not call upon my brethren to give up the Haskalah, return again to the Ghettos, or teach their children the jargon, as Lilienblum does." ⁶³ Before we go to Palestine,

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we must prepare ourselves in a way to redeem our minds before we redeem our bodies." ⁶⁴

With such views as these, Gordon could not logically enter heart and soul into the movement, and, in point of fact, he had intended to keep silent. But in 1883, on a visit to his native town, Wilna, the "Lovers of Zion" there, with Levanda at their head, rebuked him for his silence, saying that silence on the part of a man like him meant opposition, which was certainly not his intention. Then Gordon determined to agitate the question. But since he was not fully convinced in his heart of the practicability of the movement, his agitation could not but be vague and obscure.

Gordon, on the whole, was not a profound thinker; he echoed the thoughts of others, floated with the current, while thinking that he was directing and controlling it.⁶⁵ Moreover, he had no literary tact. He loved his people, but, not having a deep comprehension of their situation, he was moved to joy or despair by the most trifling event in their life. Nor was his style fit for journalistic work. His diction was a combination of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Talmudic quotations; one of his editorials, written in 1887, was in rhyme. He indulged in circumlocution, and was often carried

away by the current of his own verbosity, by his use of Biblical quotations and expressions, to such an extent that the reader could hardly find out what he was driving at. His chief duty as editor appeared to him to be the improvement of style. "The Hebrew paper is a school for language," was his motto. As a reviewer of books he criticised the style above everything else. He never attempted to analyze the contents of a book, the personality of the writer, or other literary factors. The best book was to him the one written in the most graceful and correct language. But though Gordon's style was not adapted for editorials, it yet was inimitable. His feuilletons sparkled with wit and humor, springing not so much from the thought as from an ingenious, fanciful combination of language, of which he was master. He was not a story-teller; he could not analyze human feelings, but he had the gift of describing, masterfully and humorously, the comical side of Ghetto life, as nobody else could. On the whole, he appealed to the old generation, of which he himself was the product, rather than to the new, which had a distinct literary taste, and demanded a simple and straightforward style.

It may, nevertheless, be said with truth that Gor-

don created many writers. Whenever he recognized literary ability in a young writer, he would enter into correspondence with him, and endeavor to encourage him by kind criticism and suggestions. His immense knowledge of the old and modern Hebrew literatures, his familiarity with modern languages, and the reputation he gained through his poetic works, enveloped his head with a halo in the eyes of the younger Hebrew writers, even those of European education; and to receive a personal letter from the "great Gordon" was an honor for which they would brave everything. He thus kept some in the ranks who, without his encouragement, would have devoted themselves to other literatures. His criticism of books submitted to him was just and respectful, in strong contrast with the method of criticism prevalent before his time. Gordon thus became a Johnson, a literary dictator. The only weakness he had was that he liked to insert quotations from his own poems in articles sent to him. Brainin testifies that on the proof of his article *Gesisat ha-Sofer* ("The Writer's Agony"), sent to him by Gordon, he found the remark, "If I had written this, I should have said, 'The poet says,' " and then follows a quotation from one of his own poems.

The relation between Gordon and Zederbaum "was always strained, and by September, 1888, it became unendurable. Gordon severed all connection with the paper, and for the few remaining years of his life, he busied himself with writing from "left to right," and arranging the publication of his prose works, the first volume of which, under the name Kol Kitbe Gordon, was published by Rabnitzky and Hornstein, in 1889. His articles in Russian were written for a Russian edition of Brockhaus's *Real-Encyclopädie*, Gordon having charge of the department for Jews and Judaism.

CHAPTER IV

GORDON THE MAN

The impartial critic, who endeavors to discover the true character, the purely human side, of a great man, his strength and his foibles, is often confronted by such contradictory estimates on the part of the great man's contemporaries that he is at a loss how to gauge the truth. A man in the public eye naturally has his admirers and his detractors, the former magnifying his virtues, the latter emphasizing his weaknesses. Neither side is altogether right, neither side is altogether wrong. No saint but has his foibles, no scoundrel but has his redeeming virtues. Strange as it may seem, it is often posterity, far removed from the scene of action and from the passions and turmoil of the conflict, that is best able to form a calm and dispassionate judgment of the true character of a man who has long passed away. For instance, the final, universal opinion of Cromwell's character was two centuries in forming, and this is true in a lesser degree of men of lesser note.

Gordon was the first and foremost man of Hebrew letters in his generation. He was recognized everywhere as the "Lion of the Company," to use a characteristic phrase. In the eyes of the fledglings of the Haskalah, who had just broken through the shell of the old-fashioned Talmudic colleges, and caught their first glimpse of the beauty of knowledge in his works—and the great majority of Hebrew readers at that time belonged to this class—a halo of glory surrounded Gordon's name. Their attitude is hardly intelligible to Western men. They addressed him in terms that would seem to us the most fulsome flattery. Because he accepted such praises in the spirit in which they were given, his enemies accused him of vanity and conceit. The Hebrew critic Reuben Brainin ascribes to him, in addition, insincerity and sycophancy. Others, again, charge him with miserliness, avarice, and even usury. The gulf between the adulation of the former and the strictures of the latter is so wide as to be unbridgeable. The reason of these discrepancies in opinion is evident.

The truth of the matter is that very few people knew Gordon intimately. He was a man sufficient unto himself, and made few confidants. Familiarity he frowned down upon. He was not in-

genuous and frank. The better part of his life was spent in Lithuania, in a hostile atmosphere, where intimate friendships were out of the question, because he was practically alone in his fight against the fanatics that surrounded him. This forced silence and self-sufficiency made reticence a part of his character. In his correspondence he was a different man; his pent-up feelings found vent in his letters. In them he unbosomed himself, and betrayed a depth of feeling, a warmth of friendship, which those in personal contact with him hardly suspected him of possessing. As a result we have this anomaly: Those who knew him through his correspondence admired and extolled him, and those who came in personal touch with him considered him harsh, imperious, and hard. If one takes into account the natural envy and jealousy excited by his fame, and his unshakable position as the virtual dictator of Hebrew literature, one can readily see how Gordon's lack of personal magnetism could be used as a weapon in the hands of his enemies. Fortunately we are in possession of a key to Gordon the man that will unlock the secret of his real nature. The true character of a man is best revealed by his private correspondence. Written, as personal letters are, in an offhand man-

ner, and certainly with no eye upon posterity, they convey the moods in which the writer finds himself, the impulses that sway him, and thus his real self is revealed. The five hundred and fifty-nine letters, collected and published by I. J. Weissberg, covering a period of more than thirty years, from 1858 to 1892, will therefore be our guide in estimating Gordon the man.

The strongest characteristic of Gordon is his fearlessness and independence. He was a fighter by nature. He was devoted to his people, heart and soul, and he fought in their behalf in spite of opposition and obstacles. Did it not require the courage of "a heart of triple oak" to combat, almost single-handed, the hosts of conservatism, of darkness and superstition, arrayed against him and his fellow-Maskilim? Those were desperate days, the days of Nicholas I. and the early days of Alexander II. The life of the cultured was embittered by the fanatics, who persecuted, tormented, and denounced them to the Government as dangerous persons. Is it not a characteristic of fearlessness to throw down the gauntlet to such a class? What could have prevented Gordon from turning his back on his people and leaving them to their fate? He was a master of the German and the Russian

language, as is seen by his articles in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* and in numerous Russian magazines. He could easily have devoted himself to the literatures of these languages, and lived a life of opulence and honor. But he loved his people, and he realized that the only way to reach them was by means of the Hebrew language, and in Hebrew he wrote. He raised his mighty voice on behalf of culture before deaf ears. The crowd uttered a howl of disapproval. It denounced him, but he stood his ground.

The polemics he was forced into, with both the Maskilim and their opponents, embittered his life; but he never flinched. "I maintain that every Jew of our time who has the ability to do something, and the opportunity of doing it, in behalf of his people, morally, intellectually, or economically, and does not do it, is guilty of the crime of treason." "Do not such sentiments bespeak the true, unselfish patriot? Moreover, it must be borne in mind that Gordon never wrote for money. His contributions to Ha-Shahar, the most valuable of his poems, were given as a freewill offering, because he thought the paper worthy of support." The Society for the Spread of the Haskalah, which had published his poetical works in 1884, had

promised him a certain remuneration for his work, "after the costs of publication shall have been paid." Gordon never pressed his claim upon them, and the debt was allowed to run on indefinitely. He even hated to associate with men who made Hebrew literature a business undertaking. In a letter to his friend, I. J. Weissberg, he says: "You keep nudging me continually, 'Work in the sanctuary' Though you must know that 'the essence of my soul is coin' [I believe this phrase was invented by Frishman], I would under no consideration associate with men who have no spirit but that of business." "I feel that old age is coming on. . . . My only hope is that my age will not put my youth to shame; and as in my younger days I managed to live in independence, so I shall endeavor to finish my life in labor, work, and toil. The only honor I ask is that when I am dead it may be said of me that there was a writer in Israel who did not humiliate himself, who did not ask for charity, who did not throw himself upon the public, but earned his bread by his honest toil."⁹⁹ He gave up his position on *Ha-Meliz*, which paid him three thousand roubles a year, a considerable salary in Russia, because Zederbaum, the publisher, did not come up to his

standard of honesty and probity in the conduct of his paper.

It will be readily seen that a man of such independence would not condescend to sycophancy. That he liked flattery—and who does not?—may be true, but not in its sinister sense. He had devoted his life to the interests of Hebrew literature, and he naturally felt gratified when the younger writers looked up to him as their dictator, and spoke of him in flattering terms. Still, Gordon didn't make much of it. It always seemed to him that his life's work was a failure, and the compliments paid to him were mere irony; and many of his strongest poems are written in a strain of pessimism.

Gordon's relation to Smolensky* affords another

* Dr. J. Klausner well expresses the difference between Gordon and Smolensky, with reference to their respective attitudes towards Hebrew literature: "Gordon regarded Hebrew literature as a means of promoting the ideals of modern civilization, the end in view being the Haskalah. Smolensky looked upon it as an end in itself, as a necessary national possession. Essentially, though, their object was identical. Smolensky endeavored to develop a national consciousness, because such consciousness would tend to the moral and intellectual upliftment of the race, which was Gordon's object also. Gordon was not opposed to nationalism, only he was too practical to share the exaggerated hopes of the ardent dreamers. This thought is explicitly stated in his letters." See *Ziyyun li-Meshorer*, 1894.

indication of his nobility of character. Mordecai Cohen, carried away by his excessive admiration for Smolensky, endeavors to extol him at the expense of Gordon. Gordon,⁷⁰ he says, was evidently jealous of Smolensky, because of the love manifested towards him by so many of the younger writers. Gordon had many admirers, but few friends. In Gordon's letters, however, we hear a different tale. "Ha-Shahar pleases me very much. Its editor is a man of talent and good common sense, and I send him my contributions with pleasure."⁷¹ "I like Ha-Shahar because of its frankness, and because its editor removed the mask behind which other Jewish editors hide themselves. Not only is Smolensky personally more capable than his colleagues, but he invites every writer to speak his opinion freely. . . . If you [Kaplan] can do anything for him in the way of getting new subscribers, do so at once, for he deserves it: if not, send him your own contributions, poems or prose articles."⁷² From these letters written to Kaplan, Gordon's lifelong and most intimate friend, from whom he hid nothing, it is evident that Gordon bore Smolensky no ill-will, personally, but that, on the contrary, he tried to do for Ha-Shahar what he could.

The coldness between these two great leaders in Israel was due to their different temperaments. Smolensky was enthusiastic and impulsive; Gordon was cool and deliberate. Gordon did not sympathize with the extreme nationalism of Smolensky, as we have shown above. Only once Gordon evinced some bitterness towards Smolensky, which, however, was caused by the unpardonable neglect of the latter. When, in 1882, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Gordon's activity in Hebrew literature was celebrated by the Maskilim all over Russia, Smolensky not only ignored the occurrence in his *Shahar*, but he did not even write a few personal words of congratulation. Smolensky tried to excuse himself in *Ha-Shahar*, a few months later, by stating that he thought the celebration of Gordon's Jubilee had been postponed on account of the riots then raging in Russia, as if the riots could have prevented him, in Vienna, from writing a few personal words of felicitation. He atoned for his neglect by writing a long and very complimentary appreciation of Gordon's works in *Ha-Shahar*.⁷³ Gordon accepted the apology with good grace, though he could not refrain from expressing his chagrin to his friend Dolitzky: "Smolensky is angry at me, and did not even congratulate me on

my Jubilee. While he was in St. Petersburg in 1881, I did not begrudge the five roubles for the banquet given in his honor [April 5, 1881], but he doesn't care to spend five kreuzer to write a few lines to me, because I cannot do for him now as much as I did before." " The exceedingly touching poem which he wrote on the death of Smolensky also goes to show his sincere regard for the lamented journalist. Even his criticism of Smolensky is mild and just. He says: " I knew Smolensky and realized his value. He was undoubtedly an excellent writer, and a man of great abilities; and, had he lived longer [Smolensky died at the age of forty-three], he would have accomplished a great deal of good. But he also had his shortcomings as a writer and as a man. His fault as a writer was his diffuseness and his habit of circumlocution. He repeated the same thought over and over again in different words, probably because he had to fill up his paper by himself, having but few contributors. His shortcomings as a man consisted in that he considered himself a great man, an authority, which has the same effect upon a writer as conscious beauty upon a girl." " In all this, there is certainly no malice, but simply a frank, even sympathetic expression of opinion.

The fairest estimate of Gordon's character is given by I. H. Rabnitzky, in the article "Gordon Seen through His Letters."⁷⁶ The writer says, "From many of Gordon's letters, we recognize his modesty—a trait characteristic of truly great men." At the age of twenty-seven Gordon himself writes: "I know well my own insignificance, and therefore I have vowed in my heart of hearts to strive to live up to the expectations of my friends who have highly complimented me on my work." "Such sentiments are common in his letters."⁷⁸ Nor are these expressions of modesty feigned. We feel they are genuine and natural. He was not ashamed to acknowledge his errors, but he never passed over in silence any attack on his honor. He was even ready to suspect his critic of personal enmity or other sinister motives. After Lilienblum's criticism appeared in *Meliz Ehad mini Elef* in 1884, he says in a letter:⁷⁹ "The truth is that Zederbaum hired Lilienblum to assail me,"⁸⁰ though again and again Gordon speaks of Lilienblum in the highest terms of respect.

In general, Gordon is not distinguished for ready forgiveness. Illustrations of bad temper are seen frequently in his letters, especially against Zederbaum. Gordon undoubtedly had reasons to

be bitter against him, but he goes beyond all bounds in his ridicule of the editor of Ha-Meliz. In his letter ⁸¹ to Kaplan, in which he asked him to urge the Maskilim of Riga to congratulate Zederbaum on his seventieth anniversary, he says: "He certainly deserves the honor, and we also have cause for congratulation. For what had we done, had this been his thirtieth or fortieth instead of his seventieth birthday?"

In pecuniary matters he was punctilious, because just. Scrupulous with regard to other people's money, he saw no reason to forego any of his own, and his exactitude leads him to keep detailed accounts, even to cents, that are sometimes repellant. Considering this trait of close-fistedness and that he even loaned out money on interest (on what authority this report is based, I could not establish), it is the more surprising that in a letter to Syrkin he says: ⁸² "We are friends, and need not be ashamed before each other. I have saved up a few hundred roubles, and laid them by for a rainy day. I am ready to lend you two hundred roubles until your condition improves." The essence of Gordon's soul then was not coin. Many letters testify to his readiness and willingness to help his friends and exert himself in their behalf.

A profound feeling of love for his family breathes from many of his letters. He does not speak much of his wife, nor of his son, who left him because they could not agree, but of his two daughters, and particularly of his grandson Jacob, he speaks with the deepest affection. In a letter to Kaplan, the father of his son-in-law, he says: "I am sorry that you cannot see our grandson now, while he still looks like a cherub, with the smile of innocence on his lips. You will see him after the Shekinah has departed from him." In many and many a letter to Kaplan he dwells with delight upon the growth and mental development of their grandson, what games he indulges in, and his childish questions and remarks. His whole heart is taken up with his little grandson. He endeavored to give him a Hebrew education, and it is with the greatest delight that he reports to Kaplan that their grandson signed his full name in Hebrew, יעקב בן מקסים קאפלן, without any assistance, and the progress he was making in his Hebrew studies; and great is his joy when he writes: "I send you enclosed a three-line letter in Hebrew, written by Jacob."⁸² He considered the Hebrew instruction of his grandson as a sacred duty. He never missed a day. His son-in-law, however, must have looked

with disfavor upon the Hebrew instruction the little chap received. Gordon complains to Kaplan that Maxim never allows him to prolong the lesson even one minute beyond the appointed hour; at times, when he came to instruct his grandson, he would find him out, according to the instructions of his son-in-law. The lessons were thus neglected, and it was almost in despair that he wrote to Kaplan that his grandson had already forgotten how to read Hebrew. Such is the irony of fate. The children of the two foremost Hebrew writers of the day were not able to read their own parents' works, and the Hebrew language was a sealed book to them. The poet who hailed with delight any new appearance on the stage of Hebrew literature, who was enthusiastic when he found a woman who could write Hebrew, the man who had devoted all his life to Hebrew literature, had the misfortune not to be understood by his own children.

Gordon, as a truly Europeanized Jew, was naturally lax in observing the minutiae of the law, but he observed the essential practices of Judaism. He endeavored to obtain exemption, from School Director Fursow, for Jewish children from writing on the Sabbath day in the Gymnasium, as the compulsion to do it would keep many Jewish boys

away from school.⁸⁴ He was opposed to the placing of the so-called Shield of David on the synagogue, and wrote against it, both in Russian and Hebrew,⁸⁵ because it was his opinion that the symbol was connected with some superstitious practices of antiquity. He believed in a pure Judaism combined with true culture. Thus, for instance, in a speech which he made to a committee of Argentine colonists, who called on him before their departure from St. Petersburg, he dwelt upon the importance of combining Judaism with education and manual labor. "Outside of the duty which you take upon yourselves, of improving the material condition of your brethren, a holy duty is incumbent upon you, to keep intact and pure the spirit of Israel, the spirit of God, which enabled Israel to withstand all the vicissitudes of fortune in the course of two thousand years; the holy spirit which strengthened his heart to persist in his purity and in all the noble traits characteristic of the Jew, which have prevented him from sinking to the level of a serf, from whose face the image of God and of man has almost disappeared. Israel is yet ready to show to the nations a phenomenon the like of which has never been seen: a peasantry not given to drink; vintners not indulging in wine to excess;

laborers not given to brawls. However, all this will be possible only if, while taking care of the material needs of your brethren, you will take pains to care for their souls, too, by erecting schools for the young and synagogues for the aged, that the youth may not grow wild, and the old may not have to spend their leisure time after their hard labor in drinking resorts. Hence, besides the scientific men essential to a colony (physicians, chemists, and agriculturists) there must also be in every colony skilled pedagogues to establish and conduct schools, where should be taught Judaism and secular knowledge—men who have a thorough knowledge of Judaism as well as of secular science, and who know how to walk with impunity on a path with fire on one side and snow on the other.”⁸⁶

Such was Gordon the man: a lover of his people and his kind; sober, industrious, independent, self-centred, and self-sufficient; lacking personal magnetism; reticent, and yet effusive in correspondence; generally parsimonious, often very generous; scrupulously honest, exacting the same quality from others; realizing the value of money, yet refusing to accept remuneration for his poetical compositions; harsh and brooking no reflection upon his honor; tender and loving to his family and the few

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personal friends he possessed. In a word, Gordon was the type of the self-made Russian aristocratic Jew, with all his virtues and failings. On the whole, a strong man, a character not unworthy of Gordon the poet.

CHAPTER V

GORDON THE POET

EPIC POEMS

The tribute paid to Oliver Goldsmith, that there was not a department of literature he did not touch, and that he touched nothing without adorning it, may with justice be applied to Gordon. Whatever he wrote bore the stamp of so pronounced an originality as to be recognized immediately as belonging to him; for imitation was travesty. His stories and sketches mirror the life he saw around him, and move us now to tears, now to smiles, according to the fancy of the writer. But neither his stories nor his sketches, humorous to the extreme, nor his Yiddish poems, add anything to Gordon's fame; they only show his versatility. For another man these minor productions would have been sufficient to establish a literary reputation, but Gordon's fame rests mainly on his poetic works, to which we shall now direct our attention, after a few introductory remarks about the development of modern Hebrew poetry.

From the close of the golden period of Hebrew literature in the Middle Ages, the time of Gabirol, Jehudah Halevi, Harizi, and Emanuel the Roman, down to the period of the Haskalah, there was no great singer in Israel, no poet in the true significance of the word. Poetry was confined to liturgical compositions, prayers, praises, supplications, and lamentations. Israel was constantly humbled and persecuted; and the afflictions of the exile found expression in an occasional hymn that sought to affirm Israel's eternal faith in God, or to appeal to Divine mercy to put an end to his tribulations. These were adopted in the liturgy, and proved a source of consolation and strength to the unhappy children of oppression. Their muse was confined to sacred subjects. How could they sing of love, of nature, and of beauty when their life was a series of miseries and tears? Even when brighter days dawned for Israel, the Hebrew muse that had slumbered so long was reluctant to awake. Moses Zacuto (seventeenth century) and Moses Hayyim Luzzatto (first half of eighteenth century) wrote plays; but though the latter evinced true poetic gifts, the subjects chosen by both had no relation to life, and Zacuto's style was not really poetic.

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The period of the Meassefim (end of eighteenth century) marks a new departure in Hebrew poetry. Hartwig Wessely, the poet of the period, wrote an epic on Moses, which, in form at least, surpassed all contemporary poetic compositions in Hebrew. His language is purer and more forcible than that of his predecessors, and his metre is flowing and easy. But Wessely was not a creator. He used the material as he found it; he added nothing of his own, but merely adopted the Biblical account of the Exodus and that of the Midrashim, and composed them into a harmonious whole. His pictures do not excite our imagination, nor does his grandiloquence stir our hearts and our feelings. In his original poems he is weak. Outside of the above-mentioned epic, neither he nor his contemporaries wrote on Jewish subjects. Most of the writers of the Meassefim and the Bikkure ha-Ittim schools, who tried their hands at verse, composed occasional poems to friends, dukes, or princes, or translated poems from other languages. Though the scope of Hebrew poetry was thus enlarged, verses being written on flowers, birds, pastoral scenes, and the like, they had no relation to Jewish life whatever. Inspired as these writers were with the ideal of preaching culture to their people,

“ they crowed like cocks to rouse Israel from his slumber and announce the dawn of a glorious morning.’

Of the considerable bulk of Hebrew poetry up to the second half of the nineteenth century there was little that had true literary merit. Some wrote correct rhymes, but not poetry, while others wrote in a sort of unintelligible jargon. Few of those who wrote Hebrew verse in Germany, Galicia, and Italy possessed a complete mastery of the language. Even S. D. Luzzatto wrote poetry but seldom, and his diction was not invariably pure. Werbel wrote good Hebrew, but his poetic powers were limited; Eichenbaum had more poetic talent, but neither was a poet in the true sense of the word. Among them all there was not one whom we might justly compare with Gabirol or Jehudah Halevi.

Abraham Bär Lebensohn was the first modern Hebrew writer of verse that approaches the ideal of a poet. Unlike his predecessors, the themes of his compositions were not mere abstract notions or stories from the past. He sang of the beauty of life and nature; of death, of human weal and woe, of poverty, of wealth, and pity. His songs bore a practical relation to the life around him. His poems gave expression to the ideals of his time.

He endeavored to inculcate the beauty of knowledge in his readers, and the possibility of harmonizing religion and science. Moreover, Lebensohn was a perfect master of the Hebrew language. His diction was pure and elevated; he had a true sense for style. He enriched the language by coining new poetic terms based on Biblical roots, and both his rhythm and his rhyme were finished. He rises occasionally to the height of true poetry, and then his lines show the latent possibilities of the man. But Lebensohn mistook the function of the poet. Beauty of language is what he chiefly aimed at, diction was the all in all to him. His main object was to write a model Hebrew for others to imitate; but he was not possessed of deep feeling. He philosophizes and preaches in his poems, but his words fail to move us. "His words come from the head, not from the heart," as Gordon expresses it. He was a grammarian and a philosopher even in his poems. Besides, his poetry had no direct bearing upon Jewish life. The lamentable condition of his brethren under Alexander I. and Nicholas I. did not concern him; he was above the people. His sympathy goes out to humanity, and his poems are Jewish only in so far as they are human. Still, he added dignity to Hebrew poetry,

created a poetic style, and thus paved the way for the two truly great poets that succeeded him: his own son, Micah Joseph Lebensohn, and Leon Gordon.⁸⁷

Micah Joseph Lebensohn was endowed with true poetic gifts, a poet *von Gottes Gnaden*. His "Songs of Zion" show him to be a skilful interpreter of human passions and aspirations, with a profound touch of pathos and a keen appreciation of the beauties of nature. His diction is richly poetic, such as the author of the Song of Songs has given us in supreme form. His partial translations of the Aeneid betray sparks of epic possibilities, which have something Virgilian in them. Unfortunately, his young life was nipped in the bud; death claimed him before twenty-four summers had hardly shown him the beauty of life. Had he lived, he would undoubtedly have developed into a great national poet. However, it was not destined that Hebrew poetry should be enriched by his talents. Happily, Leon Gordon, the friend of his youth, remained to take his place, and he showed what beautiful harmony the Hebrew lyre is capable of when touched by the hand of the master.

Peter Smolensky thus pays his tribute to Gordon, in his forcible Hebrew diction and imagery:

"The spirit of poetry struck him with all its might. It created for him expressions which nobody can equal; it opened his eyes to see and to understand, and to paint in faithful colors all that his mind's eye saw. Gordon is a true poet in the fullest meaning of the term, and, above all, a Hebrew poet. Poets in other languages, if they do not limit themselves to the drama or to narrative poems, sing of birds, of stars, of nature, of spring, of summer and autumn and cruel winter, when the earth is dressed in a shroud; and through it all there runs an undercurrent of the sighs of the lover and the tears of the beloved, and one hears the piping of the shepherd and the lowing of the flock. But all these are not fit themes for a Hebrew poet. His heart, influenced by the language of his fathers, is full of unrest. His spirit does not exult over the daily natural phenomena; the present is not for him. His language is not given for life, but is a relic of the dead past. The spirit of the poet wanders back into the wilderness, 'midst the cedars of Lebanon and the ancient mountains; he sings dirges over the ruins of glorious cities, and he walks knee-deep in the streams of the blood of the slain; his feet stumble on the skulls wherein lofty spirits once dwelt. A three-thousand-year-long cry rings in his ears; the rattling of bones of human sacrifices disturbs his spirit, and his eyes move over a scroll written on both sides with blood and tears. . . . Can he sing of free birds, of happy rustics and amorous swains, of youths and maidens that want naught but love? Gordon's poems show us what the eyes of the prophet see; and who can see like him?"⁸⁸

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Gordon was, indeed, a true Hebrew poet. He loved his people and their language with all his heart and soul. He looked with reverence upon the past, and with hope and anticipation toward the future. But the present was terrible, almost unbearable. As a true poet, he describes what he sees around him. The pictures are not at all pleasant, but, as he himself says:

I am a painter; brush in hand
Upon the canvas I portray
Whate'er mine eyes behold. (Poems, iv, p. 132.)

To understand and appreciate Gordon fully, one must read and re-read his poems in the original. However, we shall here endeavor to give a cursory review of his poetical works, with such quotations here and there as will serve to illustrate the subject under review.

"When a man is young, he utters words of song," says the Midrash, and Gordon, full of youthful enthusiasm and inspiration, took to writing a love poem, as most young poets will. But, as a Hebrew poet, he chose as his theme the Biblical romance of David and Michal. In lofty and impassioned lines he portrays the career of David, —his persecution by Saul, his love for Saul's

daughter Michal, his wars with the Philistines, his subsequent rise to power, and the estrangement between him and Michal. The story as narrated in the Bible contains all the elements of the epic; hence the poet's inventive genius was not called into play, though there was room for poetic outbursts in the description of nature, of emotion, and of love. The majestic figure of Saul swayed by jealousy and hatred, the romantic career of David, who from a shepherd's estate rose to the throne of Israel, these are depicted by the poet vividly and forcibly in the twelve cantos of *Ahabat David u-Michal*, "The Love of David and Michal."

The poem has its weak points. Gordon is not an epic poet in the classical sense of the term. His powers of nature description are weak; he cannot interpret the human passions fully; he does not enter into the secret souls of his heroes. His descriptions of nature are couched in Biblical quotations, which, to a modern reader, are vague and unimpressive. He cannot describe a landscape in detail, not only because he lacks the expression, but also because he lacks the concept. His language is, indeed, rich and picturesque, smooth and flowing, like the brook of Siloam; but his imagery is completely without the virtue of originality, it is copied

from the Bible. So are his figures of speech. He uses them not because he feels that they represent his thoughts exactly, like Moore's Oriental imagery in "Lalla Rookh," but because they are ready made for him in the Bible. Nor is there sufficient action in the poem to be worthy of the name of epic. The poet often digresses with apostrophes to Providence (Canto ii), Love (Canto iv), Jealousy (Canto v), Happiness (Canto ix), Anger and Hope (Canto x), and Duty (Canto xi), which are medieval in their notions, and not strongly poetic in expression. His portrayal of Michal, in fact, of all the beautiful feminine creations of his fancy, is nothing but a rhymed version of the Shepherdess in Canticles. Gordon cannot tear himself away from his model, the Bible.

The above criticism may equally be applied to Gordon's second Davidic poem, *Milhamot David ba-Pelishtim*, "David's Wars against the Philistines," though in the two cantos of the latter he rises to the height of a true epic poet, especially in describing the heroic achievements of David's body-guard, and it is more original. Still one cannot fail to recognize in several passages of the two poems a striking similarity to *Shelomoh we-Kohelet*, "Solomon and Kohelet," of Lebensohn,

the younger. In fact, it seems as though Gordon had assimilated Lebensohn's poems to such an extent that he unconsciously borrowed phrases and expressions from them, only the imitation, if we may so term it, is much weaker than the original. Lebensohn, the younger, by far surpasses Gordon in the painting of natural scenery, in describing and analyzing emotions, and even in beauty and brevity of diction.

Nevertheless, considering that these were the first efforts of a youth of twenty-two, it cannot be denied that they are the production of a gifted poet. Amidst the laxity of his expressions, numerous lines stand out concise, bold, and strong, showing a wealth of feeling and force, and his diction is purely Biblical throughout. He has shown, as was his intention, that the Hebrew language, stiff and dead as it had been, was living enough and flexible enough to describe scenes dear to the heart of every Jew. The subject *per se* had nothing in it to arouse his enthusiasm and make him soar above the narrow circle he had circumscribed for himself. Given a subject nearer to his heart, given a theme that would allow his fancy free scope, and he would display all his powers.

"The Love of David and Michal," published in

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1857, is introduced by a dedicatory poem to Abraham Bär Lebensohn, in which the young poet feelingly acknowledges his indebtedness to the older man, in the words:

I am thy pupil, though within thy school

I did not come instruction to receive.

.

Thy son I am—though birth thou gavest me not—

I was a brother to thy son who's gone. . . .

Again:

And in my youth when first I seized a pen,

My lines I patterned after thine.

And he dedicates himself to the service of the Hebrew language in this forceful couplet:

The Hebrew Tongue's eternal slave am I.

My life with hers fore'er be interwoven,

a promise to which he remained faithful all his life.

His third Davidic poem, "David and Barzillai," is a pastoral, contrasting the happiness of a peaceful, contented, rustic life with the noisy, treacherous life of the palace. The poet describes the rural retreat of Barzillai, after his generous treatment of the unhappy king David, and the description savors of the field and the forest, and tells of the thoughts of faith they engender:

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He sees the changes of the eve and morn,
Beholds the sun, now dying, now reborn,
The starry hosts that tacitly proclaim
The glories of Jehovah's awful name;
And in his heart he feels there is a plan,
There is a refuge for the soul of man.
And full of faith and full of hope divine,
He placid sees the waves of life decline.

(Poems, iii, p. 154.)

David, broken in body and spirit, finds Barzillai in his retreat, and invites him to accompany him to the capital, there to share with him his regal splendor; but Barzillai delicately declines on account of old age, and because

Better is a poor, but peaceful, life

Than a crown accompanied by strife. (Ibid., p. 156.)

The bitter truth strikes home, and the king weeps as he departs.

Another Biblical poem belonging to the same cycle, "Asenath, Poti-pherah's Daughter," is based on the story of Joseph and on the Talmudic legend "that Poti-pherah, Joseph's father-in-law, is identical with Potiphar, his former master. The poet describes feelingly the history of Joseph up to his elevation, interwoven with the romance of Joseph's love for Asenath, his master's daughter,

who is his pupil, and in whom a feeling of affection for Joseph develops during his sojourn in their house. The language of the poem is free from conceit, and is plain and straightforward. The rhymes are smooth, the versification perfect, the action swift, with a few touches of sympathy interspersed here and there. It is not a great poem, but the reader is carried away by the ease and grace with which the story is told. Asenath's dream and Joseph's interpretation of it are a happy instance of adaptation from the Greek. They add to the action, and agree perfectly with the Biblical characterization of Joseph. The poem is charming because of its simplicity.

His last Biblical poem, "Zedekiah in Prison," is a monologue intended to convey the feelings of this most unfortunate king of Judah. Zedekiah is made to denounce Jeremiah in the bitterest terms, and ascribe to him his own misfortune and the downfall of the nation. His fate had come upon him because he had disobeyed Jeremiah. What business had the priest to meddle with political affairs? Saul was punished for disobeying Samuel. Was it Saul's fault that Samuel did not keep his promise, and came too late? The same with Jeremiah. He demands that the people carry no bur-

den on the Sabbath. Was this the time for observing holidays when the enemy were swarming about Jerusalem? Besides, in what way would the observance of the Sabbath prevent the impending catastrophe? In this way Zedekiah rails at Jeremiah, and complains of the injustice done to him. Gordon looks upon the struggle between Jeremiah and Zedekiah as typical of the strife between the ecclesiastical and temporal powers that has gone on in history from time immemorial. Gordon makes Zedekiah say things which Gordon himself does not agree with, though he is in sympathy with him. The poem, it must be remembered, was written in 1879, in the Lithuanian prison in which Gordon was confined, and the poetic prisoner used the royal prisoner as a mouthpiece to voice his own grievances, for he, too, had suffered at the hands of fanatics. At any rate, he could feel with Zedekiah."

The well-known story of the woman and her seven sons who refused to worship Antiochus is the theme of the poem *Ha-Ishah wi-Yeladeha*, "The Woman and her Children." The narrative is full of pathos and sublimity, and the language corresponds to the thought. *Bi-Mezulot Yam*, "In the Depths of the Sea," however, is a masterpiece that

surpasses in vigor and pathos any other production by Gordon. It is based on a well-known Jewish story relating to the sorrows of the Spanish Jews. A ship carrying Spanish exiles leaves port. Among the passengers is Peninnah, the daughter of the Rabbi of Tortonah, and her mother. The young woman, who only a month ago saw her husband burned at the stake, is so beautiful that she captivates the heart of the captain, who gives her to understand that, should she refuse to become his mistress, he will carry all his Jewish passengers to some desert island, and leave them there to their fate, as other captains had done. Peninnah promises to surrender herself to him after all the Jewish exiles are landed safely in some port. After this is done, the ship returns with Peninnah and her mother. But early in the morning of the next day, both Peninnah and her mother, to save themselves from shame, leap overboard and are drowned in the ocean, martyrs for their brethren:

The Ocean saw and trembled at the sight,
 And round about the mighty breakers roared,
 While those pure souls—and purer far than gold—
 A martyr grave beneath the billows found,
 And midst the Ocean's mountain peaks reposed.
 Unseen, unwept, beneath the deep they slept,

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The Ocean's rocks their tombstones, and the stars
Their legend, and the heavenly blue their vault.
Silent the Moon in pity looked on them;
Silent the Earth the cloud's mute gaze beheld,
The Earth that sees a myriad tragedies,
And never condescends to shed a tear."¹

(Poems, iii, p. 202.)

The last of his historical poems, Ben Shinne Arayot, "In the Lions' Teeth," is told with strong dramatic effect and lofty poetic fervor. It relates an incident of the Jewish wars with the Romans. The enemy besieged Jerusalem, and confusion and consternation reigned within the city. Driven by despair, the defenders of Jerusalem determine not to sell their country too cheaply, and they prepare themselves for the final attack. Simon, a young patriot, throws himself into the conflict; but before his departure he bids a last farewell to his beloved Martha, who encourages him to fight for his country to the bitter end."

Simon departs. The Jews are defeated; Simon is carried as a captive to Rome, and Martha is sold as a slave to a Roman matron. The young hero is made to fight with a lion in the arena. Among the spectators is Martha, who accompanied her mistress Agrippina to the amphitheatre. Martha rec-

ognizes her lover, and, with anguish in her soul, watches the outcome of the terrible conflict. At first, Simon succeeds in thrusting his sword into the side of the fierce Libyan lion; but his blade is broken, and he can defend himself no longer. In despair he raises his eyes and recognizes his Martha in the multitude. He musters up all his courage and attacks the lion bare-handed in the hope that, should he succeed in killing the lion, he may gain Martha's and his own freedom. But his strength fails him. The wounded lion leaps upon him and tears him limb from limb. At this horrible spectacle a shout of delight issues from the throats of the savage lookers-on. Martha can bear it no longer. A shriek of anguish escapes her; she reels, and expires together with her lover.

The catastrophe that befell the Jewish nation the poet ascribes, as in so many other instances, to the *Weltanschauung* of the Rabbis. For centuries they taught the law, established schools where they instructed the people to ignore true understanding, believe in superstition, and look upon this life as trivial. Instead of teaching handicrafts and the useful arts, instead of establishing military schools and preparing weapons for the imminent conflict with the Romans, the Rabbis taught

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Within the walls to be immured,
To row against life's vital stream;
Alive in Heaven, dead on Earth;
In dream to talk—awake to dream.

(Poems, iii, pp. 175-6.)

Again:

Within Ben Gorion's halls the Rabbis met—
Did they discuss the nation's crying need?
No! sword in hand they argued and decreed:
One must not drink nor separate nor read

(Ibid.)

Zeal and patriotism alone cannot avail under such leaders.

The poet bases his view, that the Jews were not prepared for war with the Romans, on Josephus.⁸³ His attitude was attacked by M. Pines in *Ha-Maggid*, and by Lilienblum,⁸⁴ who defend the position of the Rabbis and roundly abuse Gordon for taking the testimony of the "traitor Josephus." It seems, however, that Gordon did not intend to criticise the ancient Rabbis so much as his contemporaries, of whom what he said was certainly true; but, writing of an historical epoch, he made use of the past to illustrate the conditions of the present.

So much for his historical poems. In the "Love of David and Michal" he had not yet emancipated

himself from the influence of the elder Lebensohn,⁹⁸ who cared more for purity and accuracy of diction than for the strength and poetic expression of the thought. In his later poems, however, he outstripped his master by far. "His diction is unsurpassable; pure, like Lebensohn's, but freer and sweeter. Reading him, we hear the voice of a Hebrew poet as we heard it in Spain." *

But Gordon was not satisfied with singing of the past. He desired to show his people the misery of the present, in order to prepare them for a happier future. And it was in the "Epics of the Present" that he showed himself the supreme master of style, humor, and sarcasm. Upon these poems he brought to bear the vast store of Talmudic knowledge and style at his command, and he portrayed pictures of life, the like of which cannot be found in any literature, not only because they are Jewish to the core, but also because no poet ever painted such pictures with the vividness of the life they describe. His chief aim was to bring about religious reforms in Rabbinical Judaism through this cycle of poems, consisting of *Kozo shel Yod*, "The Dot on a Yod," *Shomeret Yabam*, "Waiting for a Brother-in-law," *Ashakka de-Rispak*, "A Wagon's Axle," *We-Somahta be-Hageka*, "Rejoice on thy

Festival," and Shene Yosef ben Shimeon, "Two Josephs ben Simon."

The greatest poem of the cycle is "The Dot on a Yod," written in 1876." It is directed against the rigorous interpretation of the laws of divorce by the Rabbis. Bath-shua was married at the age of seventeen to a certain Hillel, a Talmudic student, and after living with her three years her husband left her to seek his fortune abroad. At first she heard from her husband regularly, but after a few months he ceased to write, and nobody knew his whereabouts. Her father died, too; and the poor woman, left destitute with two children, opened a small shop, to support her family. Meanwhile there arrived in Ayolon, the scene where the action is laid, a young man, Fabi, to superintend the railway constructions in the town. He fell in love with Bath-shua and learned her story. Through a friend in Liverpool he heard that Hillel was peddling there, and would be willing to divorce his wife according to Jewish law, for a consideration of five hundred roubles, with which he intended to go to America. Fabi sent the money, and the Get, or bill of divorce, arrived in Ayolon, and was duly transmitted to the Rabbi. Fabi and Bath-shua were to be married after the ceremony

of the divorce was performed by the Rabbi. Unfortunately, the Rabbi⁸⁸ discovered that the name Hillel (הילל) was spelled without a Yod in the Get. He declared the Get invalid. Meanwhile the news arrived that the vessel on which Hillel had sailed for America had foundered in the ocean, and all on board were lost. Since, according to Rabbinical law, "the wife of a man lost in bottomless waters cannot remarry," the poor woman was left a grass-widow (Agunah) all her life.

Such is the simple plot of the poem, but how vividly and touchingly it is told! The whole sad life of the Jewish woman of the time is passed in review before us. The poet begins by describing the Jewish woman in the pathetic lines:

Eternal bondage is the Jewess's life:
Her shop she tends incessant day by day;
A mother she—she nurses and she weans,
And bakes and cooks and quickly fades away.

(Poems, iv, p. 5.).

For not only was she socially man's inferior, but

E'en heaven's dew they kept from thee:
Of all religious laws they heed
To thee the niggards gave but three.

She is given in marriage without her consent, dis-

regarding all feelings of love she may have, for

Love? Our mothers never knew it!

and are

Arameans they, the maiden to consult?⁹⁹

The poet next describes Bath-shua's beauty and accomplishments; her engagement to Hillel, who had nothing to recommend him but his Talmudic scholarship, for

His eyes were calf-like, and his locks like tails,

His face all shrivelled—a Rabbi Zadok's fig,¹⁰⁰

But he is versed in deep Rabbinic lore,

with which she must have been satisfied, for she never said a word:

And can the gossips tell aright

Who claim Bath-shua weeps at night?

her marriage and life with him; his departure for lands unknown; her acquaintance with Fabi; the divorce; Rabbi הכורי ופסי, so called, not because he was a descendant of Tartars, but because

Rabbi Vofsi's was a Tartar soul, indeed;

the tragic scene when the divorce was declared invalid; and the subsequent misery of Bath-shua, who summarizes her misfortune in the phrase,

A letter's dot has proved my ruin.

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The poem is in many places sarcastic, but the heart of the poet goes out to his people, who do not realize the full extent of their misery:

The City's fall we constantly recall,
The nation's fall as constantly ignore;
The sound of glass beneath the Huppah broken,
Echoes the misery of our children's cries.¹⁰¹

(Poems, iv, p. 18.)

Pity the poet who sees and describes such scenes!

The poem has its shortcomings, too. The picture of Bath-shua is on the one hand overdrawn, and on the other indefinite. Nor does the poet enter deep into the inner psychology of his heroes and heroines. But on the whole Kozo shel Yod is one of the most realistic and impressive poems ever written in Hebrew.

"Waiting for a Brother-in-law" is less vigorous and realistic, though pathetic and impressive. The avowed purpose of the poem is to hold up to scorn the institution of the Levirate marriage, which is a mere formality, and yet is practised to the discomfort and often the ruin of the unhappy widow—and accidentally to ridicule the greedy "enlightened Rabbis," graduates of the Russian Rabbinical Seminaries. A young man who has lived happily

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with his wife for three years is lying on his death-bed, watched day and night by his faithful wife,

A Jewish daughter she—her duty knows—

The couple are childless, and, to aggravate the misery of the woman about to become a widow, a son had been born to her mother-in-law a short time before. To obviate the necessity of the young woman's waiting for the child to grow up, in order to give her Halizah, the dying husband is delicately requested by his mother to divorce his wife before his death. He consents. The "enlightened Rabbi" is sent for to perform the ceremony. He is a practical man; he knows "two hundred are more than one hundred," and insists upon being paid two hundred roubles for his services. The dying man's parents beg him to take one hundred, all their fortune having been spent in a vain effort to save their son. The Rabbi insists upon two hundred, but while they are haggling,

"Kind Death" sets Jonah free
From bickering and strife,
From Rabbis and from laws,

and the unhappy widow was left to wait for her infant brother-in-law's Halizah.

It must be acknowledged that the Rabbi pictured

in the poem is not only unnatural, but impossible, and that the entire episode does not present a scene from real life. It is rather a criticism of the institution of Halizah carried to its extreme logical conclusion. The poet intends to show what havoc such an effete institution may cause in unfavorable circumstances. After all, though the Rabbi is impossible, many women were actually ruined in similar cases, when the husband died without divorcing his wife, and against such actualities the poem was directed. The Rabbi might have been omitted without injuring the poem; on the contrary, the omission would have strengthened the impression. Possibly Gordon had a special so-called "enlightened Rabbi" in view, against whom he directed the last stanza. This poem was written in 1879, in St. Petersburg, after the author's return from exile. Does he refer to the Rabbi by whose partisans he was denounced and thrown into prison? The fact that he selected an "enlightened Rabbi" instead of an every-day Orthodox Rabbi, such as he usually criticises, would lend color to the supposition.¹⁰²

"A Wagon's Axle," written in 1867, is a tragedy-comedy of the actual Jewish life of his time; and, as in the poems analyzed above, presents the Rabbi in an unfavorable light. Eliphelet, a coach-

man, sits down with his wife and children to the Seder, on the first night of Passover, and after skimming through the Haggadah, he prepares himself for the sumptuous meal with pleasant anticipations. Suddenly a cry of anguish rings out from the kitchen, and Sarah, his wife, announces the terrible news that "a grain has been found in the soup!" She makes ready to go to the Rabbi, but her husband threatens her with his fist, and she desists. He had worked so hard all winter to prepare for the Passover, and now all his labor is to be destroyed in an instant! Sarah does not touch the food; her husband and the children eat it, but the joy of the holiday is gone. On the next day Sarah finds another grain in the pot. She cannot bear "the weight of two grains," and she hastens to consult the Rabbi, who, by the single word "leaven," destroys all her hopes, and prohibits the use both of the food and the dishes. The poor woman is afraid to go home, remembering the threats of violence made by her husband the night before. The Rabbi sends two public officers¹⁰³ to arrest Eliphelet, and fines him. But henceforth the peace of the family is broken. Eliphelet maltreats his wife for a time, and then divorces her.

Trivial and incomprehensible as all this may

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seem to men of modern days, it forms part of the tragedy of Russian Ghetto life in the days of Nicholas I. The poet does not tell the incident in a mock-heroic fashion; he describes it with all the feeling and pathos of a tragedy. Thinking of the Seder, and of the stereotyped answer in response to the "four questions," the poet reflects:

We *have been* slaves—alas! What are we now?
Do we not fall and sink, year in, year out?
Are we not fettered still, are we not bound
By superstition's shackles strong and stout?

And how vividly we see the Seder:

Thank God! all is prepared; the wine is red;
Inviting looks the round unleavened bread;
From floor to ceiling all is clean and bright;
The candles shed profuse a mellow light;
The children 'round the board; and full of cheer
The pious wife attends now there, now here;
And he, arrayed in linen tunic white,
Of heart content, of countenance all bright,
Out of the pictured old Haggadah reads
The plagues, the exodus, God's wondrous deeds;
Asserts that soon Elijah the divine
Will come to drink with them his cup of wine.

(Poems, iv, p. 52.)

What a picture of Jewish idealism! Unfortunately everything is soon changed after the terrible

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discovery of the grain in the soup. Eliphelet does not finish the Haggadah, and

To guard the Afkoman he forgot;
The pillows stirred, 'twas gone, he saw it not;
Along the walls fantastic shadows crept,
And secretly the peaceful angels wept.
Slowly died the candle's flickering flame;
The door was opened—no Elijah came.

Eliphelet avenges himself on Sarah for going to consult the Rabbi:

He visited Sarah as he had said,¹⁰⁴
And did unto Sarah as he had spoken.

And after the divorce, was not Sarah justified in wailing:

A wagon's axle settled Bethar's doom,
Two barley grains destroyed my home!

Such is the tragedy of Jewish life!

"Rejoice on Thy Festival" is another instance taken by the poet to show the inconveniences a strict adherence to Rabbinical laws may cause. Rabbi Kalman, a Jew from the Pale, who did business in Moscow far away from his home, was informed by his wife that a good match had been proposed for their daughter. A meeting had been agreed on for the intended bride and groom and the parents and friends for the second day of Sukkot, and she requested him to come home for the

joyful occasion. Rabbi Kalman informed his wife that he would arrive home on the seventh day of Sukkot, and started out from Moscow. The journey was long and tedious, for it was in ante-railway days. The poor man tried his best to be at home for the holidays; in fact, he had come to within three miles of his place, when the shadows of night told him that the holiday had begun. Unwilling to travel even the short distance on a holiday, Rabbi Kalman was forced to stop over in a village near by. He reached home early on the morning after the holiday, only to find his wife and his daughter sick with disappointment, for the groom and his party had left, disgusted with the unnecessary delay on the part of the bride's father.

The poet purposely exaggerated, in order to show the inconvenience of the Rabbinical law of "limits." The moral is shown in the lines:

Two thousand paces! how much woe and grief
They sudden brought unto this family . . . (P. 69.)

and

Had not your teachers led you with a pillar of cloud, you would not have refrained from returning home after dark: for to rejoice on a festival is a Biblical law, whereas the law of "limits" is only Rabbinic.

For Rabbi Kalman, however, the Rabbinical ordi-

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nances were as binding as the Mosaic, and he suffered martyrdom for them.

The last poem of the series, "The Two Josephs ben Simon," surpasses by far in its pathos, realism, and depth of feeling any poem in the Hebrew language. It is a terrible arraignment of the Jewish Consistorial boards during the reign of Nicholas I., and shows at the same time the attitude of the masses towards the Maskilim, the men of the newer school. Joseph ben Simon was a child-prodigy. At thirteen he was famous for his knowledge and acumen in the Talmud, and he was looked upon as the future light of Israel in the Rabbinical sense. But Joseph soon realized the futility of a study of the Talmud only, and secretly he began to indulge in secular studies also, to the consternation of his admirers. His father attempted to dissuade him from his course; but Joseph maintained that the study of the sciences was not subversive of Judaism. He soon left his native town, and went to Padua to study medicine.

In the same town there was another boy of Joseph's age, Uri, the son of Johanan the shoemaker. He was a wild lad, who never cared to study, though his father tried hard to make a Rabbi of him. By the age of nineteen he had become the

terror of the town. He took to horse-dealing, and engaged in questionable undertakings. Upon being rebuked by his honest father, he left home and disappeared.

Rabbi Shamgar, the head of the Consistory, now appears on the scene. The board-rooms are described, with Rabbi Shamgar sitting in judgment. It was the time of conscription; the board is busy selecting recruits, taken mostly from the ranks of the poor; the rich buy exemptions for their sons. One woman complains of the abduction of her only son for military service; but Rabbi Shamgar finds that she belongs to the family of a man who has four sons, and since his sons are scholars, her only son has to be the scapegoat. Other people come on business, to get passports and similar things, and every one is attended to in accordance with the bribe he offers. Finally, a rough-looking, stout, but well-dressed young man appears and asks for a passport. He is Uri, the shoemaker's son. He speaks arrogantly and impudently. He has to go abroad on "business," and must have a passport. "But," objects Shamgar, "you are a hidden one." * In response, the applicant draws a hun-

* Many fathers, to save their sons from military conscription under Nicholas, the length of service being twenty-five years,

dred-rouble note from his pocket. The argument is convincing enough. Rabbi Shamgar knits his brow, thinks hard for a few minutes, then his face lights up: he has discovered a way out of the difficulty. "Some three years ago," he says, "a young man of your age disappeared, and nobody knows his whereabouts. I will therefore issue a passport; only you have to assume his name." Uri consents readily; he pays the money, and leaves, a new man, for he is now Joseph ben Simon. Rabbi Shamgar goes to the synagogue to recite the afternoon prayer.

Meanwhile, the real Joseph ben Simon was studying diligently in Padua, not only medicine, but also Jewish branches. He was an idealist. Medicine was to afford him his livelihood; for the rest he

refused to enroll their male children in the official registers at their birth. These were called "hidden ones" (נעלמים, in Hebrew). Officially, these were non-existent. As such proceedings were, of course, illegal, the "hidden ones" were always at the mercy of the professional informers, who constantly demanded blackmail in payment of their silence; and they suffered the further disadvantage of being unable to obtain a passport legally. As a passport is absolutely essential to freedom of movement in Russia, the "hidden ones" were forced to apply to the Consistorial boards for the documents. The latter often issued fraudulent passports in the name either of the dead or of absentees, for a money consideration, of course, and thus caused such tragedies as are described in the poem.

would preach and teach a more enlightened Judaism, a Judaism more in harmony with philosophy. After suffering hardships and privations for five years, he reached his goal; he became a doctor of medicine and philosophy. He hesitated about returning to his native land. But the thought that the people there needed him most, and the news that his mother was sick, banished all hesitation. With his documents and his old passport in his pocket, he started home.

The train roared and puffed, and Joseph, tired and weary, fell asleep. In his dreams he saw himself as a Rabbi, instituting various reforms to lighten the life of his people, and a smile of satisfaction played on his lips when he heard the blessings showered upon him by his followers. He awoke with pleasant emotions, but fell asleep again. A disquieting dream came to torment him. He saw himself in purgatory, where all who ridiculed the Rabbis were punished. Among them he found Elisha ben Abuya, Acosta, Spinoza, various Jewish Maskilim, such as Levinsohn, Shatzkes, Erter, and Lebensohn; and he heard a voice proclaiming his own doom. He awoke with a start. Meanwhile the train was rushing on. A little more puffing and roaring of the engine, and Joseph found himself

on Russian soil. Officers demanded passports; Joseph showed his, and trembled at the impression it made on the officer. He thought it was because his passport was out of date, and declared himself ready to pay the prescribed fine. The officer, however, arrested him on the charge of murder. His fellow-passengers could hardly realize that their quiet, apparently naïve, fellow-traveller, whom they thought to be a doctor, was a murderer! In prison Joseph was told that some months before a horse-dealer had tried to smuggle a drove of horses across the boundary line. The officers overtook him; a fight ensued, and in the *mêlée* that followed one officer was killed by the desperate smuggler. He himself escaped, but among his effects his passport was found, and the description and name tallied with those of the present prisoner. In vain Joseph protested that he had never dealt in horses, and that he had been out of Russia these five years. He was kept in prison for some time, and then in company with other criminals he was driven on foot to his native town for trial. The convoy, upon arrival there, met a funeral procession. The soldiers, according to law, presented arms in honor of the dead. Joseph recognized his father as the chief mourner, and wanted to throw

himself on the bier; but the soldiers gruffly forced him back into the line of march. Joseph was found guilty because the Consistorial authorities, especially Rabbi Shamgar, deposed that there was only one Joseph ben Simon in the town, who had long ago acquired a bad reputation as a heretic. There was nobody to take Joseph's part, since he was considered a heretic. He was sentenced to hard labor. Rabbi Shamgar continued as the head of the Consistory.

The poem begins with a scathingly sarcastic enumeration of the powers of Rabbi Shamgar, who is described with all Divine attributes, for, by doctoring the official registers, he changed men into women, young into old, gave childless parents a half-dozen sons, and vice versa. These miracles, however, happen to the rich only, who have to pay for them.

Joseph's youth is described:

The Talmud he read at six,
The Tosafists at seven,
And casuistry at eight.

At thirteen he was a Talmudist:

In the Talmudic sea
The leviathan was he,

and every rich man who had a daughter of marriageable age

Schemed to bait the leviathan.

A realistic description of the synagogue-court is next given (Canto iv); it is so realistic, in fact, that we do not care to see it. Brainin says¹⁰⁵ that such verses would not be written by a poet in any other language. Perhaps; but then no other people presents such a sight. Gordon's picture is, however, undoubtedly overdrawn.

The poet takes occasion in Canto v to apostrophize the extraordinary desire for study, characteristic of Jewish boys:

How strong art thou, all-conquering desire
To know, in youthful Jewish minds ingrained!
Upon the shrine thou art the constant fire
.

Upon the roads to Jewish schools that lead,
Behold poor youngsters hastening with all speed. (P. 101.)
.

And what awaits them there? A life of need
And misery, the cold, bare floor their bed—
Such is the Law—and what if one fall dead!

And again, speaking of the Russians who glory
in their Lomonosoff, a self-made poet:

How many Lomonossofs in the Pale?

It is interesting to notice in Canto vi that all the reforms Joseph, or rather Gordon, would like to see instituted are of such a character that they would not in the least infringe upon even Rabbinical Judaism, and yet would lift a burden from off the shoulders of the people. Even for advocating such trifling reforms Joseph was looked upon as a heretic!

The death and funeral of Joseph's mother are drawn by the hands of a master, and touch us to the heart with their genuine pathos. Especially vivid are the lines:

From down the street there comes a rattling din
Of pennies jingling in a box of tin,
With "Charity from death saves" the refrain;
The purses open, shut the shops remain,
And sighs escape, and tears profuse are shed:
They count, the tears, that flow for righteous dead.

But how terrible was the meeting of the two processions:

While passed the mourners' train with solemn tread,
Another column down the road was led,

and at this very moment:

"Methinks," the sexton said, "the body stirred
And trembling shook as though it were alive."

Vain fright!

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We are shocked at seeing Shamgar's hypocrisy,
who, after issuing the false passport and having
received the bribe,

The "Hundred" in his pocket stored away,
And went into the Synagogue—to pray. (P. 96.)

But how ironical and pathetic are the lines:

. . . . The pious souls
Presented him [Joseph], with kind and gracious look,
Phylacteries and a little Prayer Book.

Indeed, what other comfort could the unhappy
Joseph find?

In his *l'envoi*, Al Ye'esham Yehudah, "Blame
not Judah," the poet acknowledges that the pic-
tures he has drawn are not at all agreeable; nay,
more, he says:

My own soul also bleeds, and heavy is my heart,
At my creations' sinking in a sea of woe. (P. 132.)

But he excuses himself in the lines:

Am I to blame if the life of brother Jews
Reflects but gloomy, darkly colored hues;
And that in every station, high or low,
I hear but moans, and see the tears that flow?

In a letter of October 27, 1876,¹⁰⁸ he says:
"Perhaps my poem Ashakka de-Rispak will bring
it about that in the holes wherein Jews hide them-

selves, a family shall not be ruined because of a 'suspicion of leaven'; perhaps We-Somahta be-Hageka will show the simple-minded Rabbi Kalman or his like the foolishness of distressing himself unnecessarily in order to fulfil the commandment 'Thou shalt rejoice on thy holidays'; perhaps 'Stuffed Turkeys' will stir up the Rabbis to relax the rigor of the dietary laws; perhaps Kozo shel Yod, which I wrote with blood and tears, will save some Jewish woman in the future from lifelong ruin through the ignorance of the Rabbinical writers of grammar and the Bible; perhaps 'The Two Josephs ben Simon' will prevent a Jewish publican from issuing a false passport."

And who shall say that his poems did not have the desired effect, did not open the eyes of hundreds and thousands of his readers? Mr. Brainin may be right in holding¹⁰⁷ that there is nothing new in what Gordon says about the Rabbis. But a poet need not always be proclaiming something new, like Mr. Brainin's ideal poet, who "sees from one end of the world to the other." Gordon, by giving popular ideas a poetic garb, makes them more striking, more impressive. Had Gordon followed Brainin's suggestion as to what a poet should be, he would be unknown to-day, and could have done

nothing towards the awakening of his people. Fortunately Gordon knew his people better; he knew what would impress them, what would appeal to them. Hence his fame, hence his success, hence the good he helped to accomplish. Nor is Smolensky right in saying that his "Epics of the Present" are only of temporary value.¹⁰⁰ Many generations will come and pass before the reforms advocated by Gordon will be brought to realization. While the abuses he castigates endure in Judaism, these poems cannot fail to be of value. And when the golden days of true reform shall have come, they will be read with renewed interest, because they will be recognized as having contributed a great deal towards making the era of reform a possibility.

CHAPTER VI

GORDON THE POET

LYRIC POEMS

As a lyric poet Gordon shows his powers only when expressing his feelings in relation to his people. His poems of nature are beautiful, more because of the language than the contents. The poems "Spring" and "The Lord's Feast" are didactic rather than descriptive. The gist of the former is: every feeling man is bound in love to nature and to God. The revival in nature symbolizes resurrection and immortality to him. He philosophizes as to the origin of nature, sings praises to God, and encourages man not to fear death. As a rule, nature descriptions are not Gordon's strong point. Of the twelve sonnets in the first volume of his works only the eleventh and twelfth are Jewish; the poet bewails in them the death of two Russian Jewish periodicals, "Dawn" and "Zion." The rest are rich in rhetoric and mild satire, but lack feeling and depth. In his

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translation of Byron's Hebrew Melodies, and of some poems by Schiller, he shows himself the master of the Hebrew language that he was, the translations appearing like original poems. Gordon, the poet, revealed himself in his Jewish lyrics, for his heart is bound up with that of the people.

A poet, subject to varying moods, he is swayed alternately by feelings of joy and despair. He had dedicated himself to the Hebrew muse from his earliest youth, as stated above :

In early childhood, ere from my brow
The dew of youth was dried, a vow I vowed.
The Hebrew Tongue's eternal slave am I.
My life with hers fore'er be interwoven!

He sings because he cannot help singing, as the German poet says,

*Wenn ich nicht sinnen und dichten soll,
So ist das Leben mir kein Leben mehr.*

So Gordon :

My soul and character I cannot change,
Thus God created me, thus I remain;
The muses stir me, and I must obey;
As I have sung, I will yet sing again.

(Poems, i, p. xxii.)

He calls upon his people to arise from their lethargy:

Arise, my people, sleep no more,
The night is fled, behold the dawn. (Ibid., p. 44.)

.

This Eden land with open arms awaits thee,
Her sons shall henceforth as a brother hail thee. (Ibid.)

Alas, it proved otherwise; but the signs of the times in 1863 looked favorable; all that seemed necessary was to be

At home a Jew, without a man. (Ibid., p. 45.)

He refutes the imputation that the Jews are incapacitated for knowledge and education; and he appeals to his brethren:

To knowledge give your life.

But the poet does not always find himself in the happy mood of hopefulness. From the height of the heavens, whither he was carried on the wings of his fancy, he sees a panoramic view of the condition of his people. He beholds the pillars of Judaism trembling, on the point of collapse, and the youth escaping through the windows; the dingy

Heder [school-room] where the youth are slaughtered,

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young men sinking in the "sea of the Talmud";
the blind old man who is

A Rabbi blessing his people with a new, rigorous interpretation;
the heads of the Consistories emptying the pockets
of the people; the confusion of ideas and ideals,
one not understanding the other; and, above all, a
flock, the Eder Adonai, "The Lord's Flock,"
without pasture, led by blind goats, and its wool
sheared. He realizes

That even on high the rich are respected;

he sees also a tablet with letters erased representing
his own youthful ideals, and he can no longer con-
tain himself:

. . . . Alas!

Of all my dreams not one has come to pass,
Purification, education,
Jewish national restoration,

and he falls from heaven to earth ("On the Moon
at Night"). The same undercurrent of despair
runs through the poem *Le-mi ani Omel*, "Whom
Do I Strive for?" A vague consciousness of the
futility of his work steals upon him. Who will
understand him, who will appreciate him? The

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old generation looks with suspicion upon poetry
and the poet—

There's death in song—in rhetoric heresy,
One must not with a poet share his roof;

the tender daughters of Zion are not given a He-
brew education, for

A woman's Torah—'tis apostasy;

the new generation has gone to the opposite ex-
treme, and

With rapid strides they rush ahead,
And who can tell how long, how far?
Perchance whence there is no return

For whom, then, does he sing? He consoles him-
self with the thought that there are still left "one
in a city, two in a province" who do not ridicule
the songs of Zion. For these he sings; they will
understand him; them he embraces with tears and
exclaims:

Alas! who can divine, who can assure
That I am not the last of Zion's bards,
That you who read are not the last to read?

(P. 104.)

Such feelings of despair cling to him continually.
Even in the course of a satirical poem he cannot for-
get the misfortunes of his people, and a cry of

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anguish escapes him. The poet holds his pen in his hand. What shall the theme of his poem be? Various subjects suggest themselves to him, and one of these is:

Shall I this ink-drop towards heaven throw
Into a flood to turn, and drown my tears
Upon my people's ocean depth of woe?

The ink-drop on his pen dries up, but unfortunately not his despair. What are we? he asks in "The Lord's Flock"—a nation, a people, a race, a community? Seeing the various ways in which the Jews are exploited by their oppressors, who "skin our hide, shear our wool, and lead us in a wilderness where there is no pasture," he comes to the conclusion:

Not a people nor community
Are we; we are—a flock.

Thus also in "The Departure of the Shekinah." The Shekinah departs because it can no longer endure the cruelties and injustice rampant in the "vale of tears"; it stops a few minutes with the poet and whispers to him:

My sympathies to thee, unhappy bard,
My fellow-sufferer, like me aggrieved;
Thy bloom evaporates for lack of air,
Thy soul is stunted for the lack of space.

For what is the fate of the poet, after all?

Alas, for thee, O thou who dreamest dreams.
Thy life is one long chain of bitterness;
Thou sleepest, dreamest—momentary peace—
How breaks thy heart at the awakening!

(Poems, i, pp. 113-14.)

How, then, can the poet sing of joy and happiness?
“In my youth,” he says in Ba-Alot ha-Shahar, “At Dawn,”¹⁰⁹ “I used to rise with the dawn, invoke my muse, and sing of love, of friendship and delight, of freedom, and hope, and comfort.” But a change came over the vision of his dream. For

Ere yet the morn in glory rose,
While yet I tuned my harp’s sweet string,
A change came over me, alas!
I can but wail—I cannot sing!
For frightful dreams I saw by night,
I saw my people—horrid sight!

He saw the lowliness of his people, their numerous bruises, their false friends and evil teachers, sources of their poverty, and his life became embittered:

No more my joyous strains shall ring;
Of freedom, light, I must despair—
Eternal servitude I sing,
I dream disgrace, polluted air.

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The rhymes which from my pen-point flow
Are tear-drops for my nation's woe.

Henceforth my muse is raven black:
Each word a curse; each phrase a dirgel

And yet Lilienblum and Mordecai Cohen say that
Gordon was not a national poet. Verily, the ways
of the critic are strange.

The riots of 1881 called forth two poems from
Gordon, the one, "We Will Go, both Young and
Old," breathing defiance; the second, "Sister Ru-
hamah," consolation. In the former he says:

We were one people, one we shall remain—
Out of the selfsame well our course was hewn;
Both grief and joy we shared them all alike
In exile these twenty centuries.

And even though

The storm rages, winds terrific howl,
The foaming waves up to the throat have reached,

we will not give up the fight, but

To God we cling and to His Law,
The holy tongue we'll not forget . . .

Yet, if

By God's decree to wander we are doomed,
We go both young and old.

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In a more passionate and vehement tone, the poem "Sister Ruhamah" is one of the strongest and most pathetic of Gordon's lyrics. Not allowed to speak freely, the poet dedicates his lines to the "Daughter of Jacob whom Ben-Hamor has defiled" (an allusion to Gen. xxxiv); but the symbol is well understood, and is the more appealing. He begins with words of condolence:

Why wailest thou, O sister dear?
And wherefore do thy spirits droop?
Thy rosy cheeks why wan and sear?
Thou wast defiled by a bestial troop!
If fists prevail, if cowards assault,
O sister dear, is that thy fault?

After showing her that she had not been rendered impure by the bestiality of her assailants, since the very blood they spilled will mark them as Cain was marked with the blood of Abel, he finds a melancholy consolation in her dishonor:

. . . . I patient bore
With aching heart and body sore
Afflictions, pains which did befall;
Yet hoped, nor left my land withal—
But thy disgrace I cannot bear,
Come hence, come home, O sister dear.

And he ends by saying that since we have neither a

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house nor a mother, let us go to another inn, let us go to the land where freedom reigns supreme, where no man is ashamed of his nation or of his God.

But to return to his personal poems. In the

* The solution that Gordon suggests in his poem is evidently emigration to America, and not to Palestine. The following quotation from a letter written to M. Gordon in 1885 will throw some light on Gordon's attitude towards Zionism. In response to Lilienblum's criticism, that he did not sufficiently bewail the afflictions of Israel (referring to the riot of 1881), and that he did not sing in honor of Zionism, he says in his letter: "The reason I did not write any Jeremiad on the riot was because I did not see any use in it. Have we not enough lamentations? and will lamentations in Hebrew affect our enemies who don't read Hebrew anyhow?"

Why preach to Jews? They know their misery.

Unto the nations preach, and let them hear

And tremble

It is false that I am opposed to the ideal of a national resurrection. Like all faithful and loyal Jews I desire to see the salvation of my people; but I wish this redemption to be complete, not merely a deliverance from the yoke of the nations, to fall beneath a more terrible yoke, that of ignorance. How can a nation exist without civilization? Our fathers escaped from Egypt and took along their silver and gold, but not their darkness and plagues If we are to leave Europe without taking along its civilization, what is the good of leaving at all? It is better to perish in slavery than to lead the supposedly free life of the savage. These are the reasons why I did not write any poems on the recent events. At any rate, silence is not opposition. Secret love is sometimes better than open love." (Letters, ii, pp. 113, 114.)

poem entitled, "On my Departure from Tels," written in 1872, the poet enumerates his exertions on behalf of his people and ends with self-gratulation:

And so six years my brethren have I served,
And go without reward; but not in vain.*
My labors and the duties never swerved:
Their children's children through my work will gain.

But in the following poem, Mahalat ha-Zikkaron, his despair steals upon him again. He addresses himself to Purah, Lord of Oblivion, and begs him to cause him to forget his former ideals. In this poem Gordon shows himself iconoclastic. In his youth he had awaited the arrival of the Messiah every day; he did not come. He had hoped that the Haskalah would prove a blessing; it proved a failure. The Hebrew language used to be his delight, for he thought that

The nation revives with its tongue's renaissance,†

* An allusion to Exod. xxi. 2, 11.

† In his article *Dibre Shalom we-Emet* (*Ha-Maggid*, ii, pp. 13-14), under the pseudonym "Don Gabriel," Gordon takes the famous bibliographer Steinschneider to task for his disparagement of modern Hebrew literature (*Ozar Nehmad*, ii, Letter 5, and *Ha-Mazkir*, no. 4, pp. 7-9) and says: "You cannot tolerate a man whose words are not after your own taste and that of your country. You forget that different countries have different needs. Moreover, you prefer the most trivial literary

and, like a lover, he found pleasure in her speech,
in her every expression; even more,

She was my altar, nay, my goddess she.

This hope was also doomed to disappointment. If he could only forget his former dreams! But he feels there is no hope, unless "by means of his epitaph."

To this appeal Purah suggests drunkenness or

fragment, provided it be ancient and Oriental, to the most finished product of the present. Every writer must be a 'digger,' and all scholars antiquarians." His dislike of antiquarians is further emphasized in his biting satire *Ha-Rakab le-Bet Yehudah* ("The Rottenness in the House of Judah"), aimed against Elijah Harkavy. In the same article he takes exception to the statement of Jost (*All. Zeit. des Jud.*, 1853, p. 445), that one cannot possibly write true poetry in a dead language, be it Hebrew or Latin or Greek. Gordon insists that Hebrew is a living language, and not one to be placed in the same category with Latin or Greek. He emphasizes this thought likewise in *Kol me-Erez Russia*, in *Ha-Maggid*, 1857, nos. 34-37.

In connection with this it may be of interest to mention Gordon's visit to Zunz in 1886. On his way to Marienbad in search of health, he stopped over in Berlin for three days, and took the occasion to pay his respects to the distinguished savant. He speaks with great pleasure of this visit, and relates this anecdote: "When I introduced myself to him, he knit his brow as if trying to recall where he had heard the name before. 'I know you are one of the writers,' said Zunz. 'Wait a minute, and I'll tell you what you wrote' 'I am neither a philosopher nor a critic,' I replied. 'I am only a poet.' Had I lived in the time of Kalir, Zunz would have known all my verses, even to the

charms as an antidote to unpleasant recollections,
to which the poet replies:

I am a Jew, alas, of Naziritic race,
And cannot find oblivion or mirth in drink—
Alas! I am a man of intellect and think—
No confidence in magic formulas I place.
Woe unto me, a Jew of intellect possessed!
Incurable I am until my final rest. (Poems, v, p. 26.)

Again he exclaims in despair:

What shall I speak of, brother, what announce?
Woe if I speak, woe if I hold my peace. (Ibid., p. 36.)

After such an outburst we may believe with him
that

The Jeremiac soul perchance
Within my frame new lodgment found.

In his calmer moods he felt the sweet consciousness
of duty well done:

I, chanticleer, the task performed
Which from on high fell to my lot,
Announced the near approach of morn,
I lusty crowed, and wearied not. (Poems, v, p. 28.)

number of their letters. As I am a contemporary of Zunz, he is not responsible, and need not remember my verses." Gordon then mentioned the titles of some of his poems, which Zunz readily recalled.

He invokes his pens:

Be ye my witnesses against my foes
That in all honesty my lines I penned;
A nation's scribe, my duty I fulfilled,
And rest nor sought nor found until the end.
(Poems, i, p. 123.)

Again, in a poem to Dolitzky, he expresses his optimism in the following noble apostrophe:

Life is awful—death is dire,
Of them we both stand not in dread;
We both are not mere barren trunks,
Too dull's the axe to strike us dead,
.
Nor you nor I will e'er regret
The dreams you may and I did dream.
.
'Twas no mirage in dreams I saw,
Nor shall false light thine eyes deceive:
Like unto me the grave defy,
Soon I am gone—my pen receive!

This poem was written July 14, 1892. Three months later Gordon was no more.

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The preceding chapters will, it is hoped, have given the reader a comprehensive idea of Gordon as a poet. To quote all the noble passages of Gordon's poems would be to reproduce the six volumes of poetry which he left behind him. We have dwelt somewhat at length upon his Jewish poems, because they, more than the others, tend to show the true nature of our poet, though his "Hannah after Thirty" and "The Cemetery," which are human and express *Weltschmerz*, are equally forcible and sympathetic. The latter would, in fact, compare with Gray's Elegy. His elegy, "Oh, Brother!" on his friend Micah Joseph Lebensohn, written in 1854,* at the age of twenty-

* In his preface to this poem, Gordon describes the state of his mind at the beginning of his career in 1854: "Those were the days before the young grapes ripened; the days of the fledgling just coming out of its shell. A ray of light broke forth, and I saw that the day was approaching for me to go out in the barn and seek grain for myself; but my feathers had not yet sprouted, and my beak was not yet sharp enough. The walls of the Bet ha-Midrash began to totter, and I was standing with one foot in the four cubits of the Halakah and with the

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four, in the form of a morality play, is a masterpiece of poetic expression, and shows a command of language hardly equalled in Hebrew literature. Of his one hundred and twenty-three fables, thirty-six of which are original, the translations surpass their originals in beauty of style and diction, and his original fables are rich in humor and pithy in style. His epigrams and Almakams are keen and brilliant.

To sum up, we may say, and with truth, that Gordon stands pre-eminent, in fact unique, in Hebrew literature, as a master of language, as a poet, and as a humorist.

Gordon complains of lack of appreciation on the part of the Hebrew-reading public. Thus, in a letter written in 1880 to his bosom friend Kaplan, he says: "My work in the field of Hebrew literature, and all the honor of the new Jewish literature, are vanity. What good is it to me to have written my verses, seeing that nobody appreciates my

other in the regions of life. When I began to walk with trembling knees, to shift for myself, and there was nobody to help or support my tottering steps, I met Lebensohn, . . . a fledgling like myself, but with full-grown feathers and a stormy spirit, and he showed me the path to light. Some steps we plodded together, he leading and I following. Alas! he disappeared too soon! . . ." (Letters, i, p. 277.)

work? My songs are like the crowing of the cock, which only peasants hear and understand. . . . Can I expect praise after death, who have been almost forgotten while living?" Again, describing the funeral of Nekrassoff, Russia's national poet, and the honors showered upon him (December 30, 1879), he says:¹¹⁰ "I hoped to be a Jewish Nekrassoff; I also hoped to break the Jewish chains by the force of my words and level the wall which surrounds my people, the Chinese wall, by the trumpets of poetry [an allusion to Joshua vi. 20]. But my people do not understand, therefore I shall not die the death of poets like Nekrassoff; my people will not stone me with poems, nor crown me with flowers; would that they crown me not with thorns, and stone not my coffin! "

Fortunately Gordon was not right in thus complaining. These letters must have been written under the impulse of momentary disappointment. It is true that he was greatly chagrined, and the peace of his mind was disturbed by the unfavorable and unjust criticism of M. L. Lilienblum, who was his friend; for he thought that the critic voiced the popular sentiment. But Frishman's brilliant reply, and the polemics of other writers against Lilien-

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blum, should have reassured him. The banquet given in his honor on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his literary labors, in 1881, and the numerous letters, dispatches, and poems of congratulation proved that he was still looked upon as the "Lion of the Company." And when the Lion was dead, a cry of sorrow rang out from the hearts of his admirers—and their name is legion—not only throughout Russia, but wherever there was a Jew who read Hebrew, for every one felt that, with the death of Gordon, the Haskalah had lost one of its most daring champions, and the Hebrew muse its darling child.

No nobler tribute can be bestowed on any poet than that which Gustav Karpeles dedicated to Gordon. He says, in part: ²¹¹

"To the Schiller homestead at Weimar a poor young wanderer once came with the question, 'Does Schiller live here?' 'Yes,' was the reply, 'he lived here, but he is long since dead.' 'Schiller dead!' The poor lad could not comprehend it. 'Can a Schiller die?' I can well imagine that a similar incident may occur to some Jewish youth in the future. Leon Gordon dead! and with these words a world of poetry and fancy is destroyed for thousands of our co-religionists.

'He was a great poet; a pillar of fire of the muses.'

Soft and lovely, pure and bright rang his song when it sang of human feelings. A ray of the light of love diffused itself

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through his poetic creations, and gave them a peculiar character. He was not a mere singer of lamentations, but a leader on the path of progress and freedom. His vivid perception of the conquests of the new time expressed itself in his songs, pervaded by profound grief, which moved every feeling heart by the delicacy of their lofty sentiment and by the spirit of truth; also the old song of Zion found an echo in his poems.

"Poetry with him was not a profession, but a holy avocation. Pure honesty and modesty, which never offered appearance for life and truth, distinguished him from all his fellows. Whatever he expressed in song—the sorrows and desires of love; longing and satisfaction; grief, resignation, and cheerful reliance—all sprang out of the well of pure human sympathy, deep enough to penetrate every one, bright enough to sparkle with variegated opalescence. In everything genuine feeling finds expression; one picture suggests another, but ardent, sea-deep love for his people is always at the bottom. Gordon's art consisted in combining diverse elements of feelings and ideals in an artistic composition, in the shortest space, and by the simplest means. . . . Especially remarkable is the fact that in the desolate tyranny in which he lived, Gordon was a poet of freedom. This nightingale sang even in winter! And, indeed, his song was the tone of the nightingale and the lark; it announced the dawn of a new era to the poor, the oppressed, the deceived."

Dr. Karpeles concludes with a comment on the last line of Gordon's poem, "A Drop of Ink," which reads: "While I was thinking, the ink-drop dried"—

"No, my dear Gordon, thy pen point was never dry. Thou

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hadst so much to sing and say about all the misery that met thee!
And thousands listened to thy song, and thousands lived with
thee in the world of thy songs, which enchanted them like a mid-
summer night's dream; and thousands will revive and be elevated
by the graces of thy song, the music of thy singing, the sound
of thy words, and the power of thy feeling. Thy tomb will be
set in their souls, and they will remember forever thy profound
feeling, thy noble conceptions, thy staunch faithfulness, thy firm
truthfulness, thy pure love, lofty spirit, and, above all, thy genu-
inely poetic gifts."

GORDON'S "L'ENVOI"

But fifty years and two I lived.

Already age is coming fast.

My vigor wanes, my eyes are dim,

A cloud upon my spirit settles.

The cloud, the shadow 'tis of death!

I see him drawing nearer, nearer. . . .

My strength gives way at his approach,

Behold him aim his arrow at me!

Thy two-edged sword is but a straw!

I fear it not; it cannot fright me!

I am prepared, O death, to go

To-day or whensoever it please thee.

My work is done, within these leaves

Unto my people my soul I poured;

What matters if my day is done!

Or if my frame to ashes turn?

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And may it rot, and turn to dust.
Within these leaves my soul I bound
(For leaves possess vitality)
And from oblivion thus preserved it.

Destroy my skin, my flesh, O death,
And grind me unto dust and clay
(I am but clay—the potter thou),
My soul within my books shall live!

And some may joy when I am gone,
Some may condemn me, stone my grave;
This be my comfort: one perchance
Will see my soul and understand me;

Will feel my thought and my emotions,
In flesh and skin my spirit clothe.
And if my people gain aught by it,
Then I will lie and rot—in peace.

NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY



NOTES

¹ Harold Frederic, "The New Exodus," p. 71.

² Professor Leo Errara, "The Russian Jews," p. 25.

³ Harold Frederic, l. c., p. 71.

⁴ Errara, l. c., p. 160; Arnold White, "The Modern Jew," p. 26.

⁵ Harold Frederic, l. c., p. 73.

⁶ Errara, l. c., p. 161.

⁷ Ibid.; see ch. iii.

⁸ Ibid., p. 175.

⁹ Harold Frederic, l. c., p. 85.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 84.

¹¹ Errara, l. c., p. 75.

¹² Harold Frederic, l. c., p. 80. Instances of this kind are frequently met with in Hebrew fiction. See "The Dry Bones," in Gordon's prose sketches.

¹³ The allegation made by S. L. Citron (see *Ha-Sifrut weha-Hayyim*, Pardes, i, p. 479), that the very writers capable of writing scientific articles in German purposely wrote poor ones in Hebrew, in order to prove that the Hebrew language was unfit as a medium for useful and essential thought, is too far-fetched. The critic forgets that the Hebrew-reading public of that time was altogether different from the German. The general Hebrew reader was as yet unprepared for scientific articles.

¹⁴ See J. A. Trivash, *Li-Kebod ha-Haskalah*, in *Luah Ahiasaf*, viii, pp. 229-33.

¹⁵ Dr. S. Bernfeld, "Life of Rapoport," p. 23.

¹⁶ Dr. H. Ehrenpreis, *Ha-Shiloah*, i, pp. 494 ff.

¹⁷ S. Bernfeld, l. c., p. 14.

¹⁸ I. H. Weiss, "The Beginning of the Russian Haskalah Movement," in *Mi-Misrah umi-Ma'arob*, i, pp. 10-11.

¹⁹ On the life of Levinsohn, see Gottlober, *Ha-Asif*, i, pp. 1-111 (brochure), and I. H. Weiss, l. c., pp. 9-16.

²⁰ See *Dor Dor we-Dorshaw* in S. P. Rabinowitz's *Keneset Yisrael*, i.

²¹ J. S. Taviov, *Mibhar ha-Sifrut*, ii, p. 139; and S. L. Citron, in *Pardes*, i, pp. 189-90.

²² J. S. Taviov, l. c.

²³ S. L. Citron, *Pardes*, i, pp. 189-93.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Harold Frederic, "The New Exodus," p. 19. See ch. vi for the above data.

²⁶ Errara, "The Russian Jews," p. 25.

²⁷ Dr. P. Yampolsky, in S. P. Rabinowitz's *Keneset Yisrael*, i, p. 859.

²⁸ See S. L. Citron, *Pardes*, pp. 180-81.

²⁹ See "J. L. Gordon," by I. J. Weissberg; I. I. Graber, in *Ozar ha-Sifrut*, ii, pp. 281-82, and *Gordon's Letters*, i, no. 45.

³⁰ *Gordon, Letters*, i, p. 82.

³¹ Michael Gordon was born in Wilna, November 4, 1823. Educated in the old-fashioned way, he early broke away from the old camp, left the Talmud, and devoted himself to the cultural movement. Not a man of education in the secular sense of the term, he was a fluent writer in Hebrew, and, by nature, a gifted poet. His poems are not always finished, nor is there true lyric power in them. Only here and there a line stands out bold and strong, and now and then one meets with some fine poetic description. His poetry is mostly didactic. A collection of his poems appeared anonymously in 1861, and a second edition in 1889.

Michael Gordon married a sister of Leon Gordon in 1842. His wife died in 1848. He had a checkered career. Having no regular occupation, he tried his hand at selling whiskey, then at petty trading and teaching. His greatest grief was that one of his sons embraced Christianity in order to be eligible to the office of district physician at Chernigov. Michael Gordon died in a hospital at Kiev, December 24, 1890.

³² *Letters*, ii, p. 340.

³³ Ibid., i, p. 102.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 105.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 108.

³⁶ Dr. S. Bernfeld, "Life of Rapoport," p. 6.

³⁷ Letters, i, p. 148.

³⁸ Binah le-Toeh Ruah, Ha-Meliz, nos. 30-41; Letters, i, no. 88.

³⁹ Letters, i, p. 167.

⁴⁰ Poetical Works, iv, Satire ix.

⁴¹ Ibid., Satire x.

⁴² Kol Kitbe, i.

⁴³ Letters, ii, p. 438.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 439.

⁴⁵ Dr. M. Ehrenpreis, Ha-Shiloah, i, p. 495.

⁴⁶ Letters, i, p. 190.

⁴⁷ Mordecai Cohen, in Keneset Yisrael, i, p. 495.

⁴⁸ Letters, i, p. 183.

⁴⁹ Ibid., ii, p. 159.

⁵⁰ See Mordecai Cohen, Sikronot Nishkahim, in Luah Ahiasaf, 1900-1901, pp. 141-42.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 144.

⁵² The Board, in which Gordon was all-powerful, elected Olschwang; the opposition preferred I. S. Landau.

⁵³ According to Mordecai Cohen (Ha-Zeman, i, 1903), Gordon was denounced to the terrible "third division" by a wealthy Jewish upstart, whose ambition to be elected a member of the Board of the Society for the Spread of the Haskalah was thwarted by Gordon's strenuous objections. This man, being an ignoramus, Gordon argued, had no place on a Board composed of the flower of Russian Jewish intellect. The denunciation followed, and the police began to investigate. The servants testified that the house was frequented by young men and women. The secret police found thousands of letters in the house, which looked suspicious enough, particularly since they were written in languages which the officials couldn't read. The police sent Gordon into exile that they might meantime investigate the nature of his letters.

⁵⁴ Letters, no. 157. Their release was due to the influence of Countess Ignatieff, mother-in-law of General Zurov, the Mayor of St. Petersburg. Gordon's wife had met the Countess frequently at the house of Dr. Martin Hirsch, a famous physician, and a great admirer of Gordon. Dr. Hirsch called the attention of the Countess to the arrest of the Gordons, and through her intervention they were restored to liberty. General Gurko declared them innocent on July 13. See M. Cohen, quoted in note 53, and *Sefer Ha-Shanah*, iv, pp. 235-38.

⁵⁵ Letters, no. 158, p. 262. The official report of the society with reference to Gordon's arrest is laconic enough: "Owing to the *untoward accident* that has befallen our Secretary, Dr. A. Harkavy agreed, at the request of the Board, to act as Secretary *pro tem.*" (P. 153.)

⁵⁶ Ze'eb (Wolf) Kaplan (1826-May 18, 1887) was born at Wilkomir, and was a pupil of the famous stylist M. A. Günzburg, who recommended him very highly to the wealthy Landau of Riga, in whose house Kaplan accepted a position as tutor. Gordon first made his acquaintance in the house of his brother-in-law Michael Gordon, January 8, 1846, and the friendship thus formed, which continued all through their life, was still further cemented by the marriage of Gordon's daughter Minnie to Kaplan's son Maxim. Kaplan resided in Riga, where he conducted a highly successful Hebrew school. He was an active communal worker, and through his efforts Governor-General Shuvaloff abolished (1865) the odious tax on Jews for permission to remain over night in Riga. Kaplan was an ardent Zionist, a fluent writer in Russian, waging war against anti-Semitism, correspondent of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, and a highly gifted poet in Hebrew. See Keneset Yisrael, 1887, pp. 347-50; R. Brainin, in *Mi-Misrah umi-Ma'arob*, iii, p. 115; *Ha-Meliz*, 1888, pp. 1736-37, and nos. 168, 182, 187; M. A. Günzburg, *Debir*, ii, 114, 118, 120, 126; and *Ha-Asif* (Necrology), vol. iv.

⁵⁷ Letters, no. 158.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, i, p. 265.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

⁶⁰ The account of the relation of Gordon to Ha-Meliz is derived largely from R. Brainin, "Leon Gordon," in Ha-Shiloah, i, pp. 421-33. See also his Sikronot, Cracow, 1899.

⁶¹ Letters, ii, p. 10 (to Dolitzky).

⁶² Ibid., p. 466.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 162.

⁶⁴ Ibid., no. 392. Comp. also Gordon's articles, Ezra we-Ezra and "Our Redemption," in Ha-Meliz.

⁶⁵ Brainin, Ha-Shiloah, i, p. 426.

⁶⁶ Alexander Zederbaum (1816-1893), though not an educated man, and not a forceful Hebrew writer, played an important part in the development of Hebrew literature, through Ha-Meliz, which he founded. A tailor in Odessa, he worked his way into the field of journalism, and occupied a position of influence in the capital. His long residence in St. Petersburg gained him the acquaintance of high Government officials, and he utilized his influence with them in behalf of those who appealed to him for aid. This was a labor of love with him, and he was ever ready to give his personal service. His great passion, however, was the Meliz: he loved it as a father loves his only child. Being an admirer of Gordon's style, and realizing that his co-operation would redound to the fame of the Meliz, he humiliated himself before Gordon, who despised him for his uncouth ways, and, above all, for his tendency toward braggadocio and self-glorification. Gordon wrote a satire on Zederbaum in a pamphlet, Tefah Megullah, which appeared in 1885 under the name of Joshua ha-Levi Mezah, in which he flayed Zederbaum unmercifully in the character of Ezbon the Cabbie (Ha-Eglon). Another satire on Zederbaum was his Goren ha-Otod (Poetical Works, vi, p. 97). Zederbaum knew of Gordon's authorship of the above pamphlet, but he was still willing to put up with Gordon for the sake of his paper's reputation. See R. Brainin, Sikronot, and Gordon, Letters, ii, p. 124.

⁶⁷ Letters, i, p. 167.

⁶⁸ M. Cohen, Ha-Shiloah, i, p. 191.

⁶⁹ Letters, ii, p. 342.

⁷⁰ Luah Ahiasaf, viii, pp. 138-39.

⁷¹ Letters, i, p. 166.

⁷² Ibid., p. 237.

⁷³ Ha-Shahar, x, 9.

⁷⁴ Letters, ii, p. 4.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 265-66.

⁷⁶ Pardes, iii, pp. 228-51.

⁷⁷ Letters, no. 3.

⁷⁸ Letters, nos. 43, 46, 275, 529.

⁷⁹ Letters, no. 281.

⁸⁰ In Letter 281 Gordon says: "You mean to frighten me by stating that . . . [evidently referring to Lilienblum] is writing a criticism of my works. Well, where is the cause for alarm? Shall we shut people's mouths, or hide ourselves before criticism? An author is a public man, and must expect criticism." Gordon was piqued at Lilienblum because the criticism was narrow and unfair.

⁸¹ Letters, no. 336.

⁸² J. H. Syrkin was a communal and Zionistic leader of Minsk, the author of a book on mineralogy in Hebrew (Leipsic, 1869, with a preface by Dr. J. Fürst). See Eisenstadt, "Rabbis and Scholars of Minsk," p. 37.

⁸³ The ridiculous extent to which some critics will go, is shown by E. Atlas in his pamphlet *Mah le-Fonim u-mah le-Ahor* ("Forwards and Backwards," Warsaw, 1898), in which, among other things, he accuses Gordon of childishness, because he speaks with so much affection and emotion of his little grandson! (Pp. 12-13.)

⁸⁴ Letters, i, p. 189.

⁸⁵ "I came to the conclusion that the so-called 'Shield of David' (☆) is the Druid's foot, which witches made use of in antiquity. It is first mentioned in Hebrew literature in 'Sefer Raziel.' The Druid's foot, however, had only five points, and I cannot explain how it was changed into six" (Letters, ii, p. 37).

⁸⁶ Letters, ii, pp. 404-5.

⁸⁷ See P. Smolensky, *Ha-Shahar*, x, pp. 458-60, and *Ha-Shiloah*, ii, pp. 42-8.

⁸⁸ *Ha-Shahar*, x, pp. 42-8.

⁸⁹ *Sotah*, 13^b.

⁹⁰ Lilienblum is indignant at Gordon for allowing Zedekiah to condemn Jeremiah, and he tries to prove that Jeremiah's political policy was more expedient than the king's, and that Zedekiah was a changeling and a coward. He ends his criticism by saying that while one has a right to write anything he pleases, he has no right to publish everything he writes. (*Meliz Ehad mini Elef*, pp. 16-21.) Carried away by his indignation, Lilienblum forgets that he is criticising, not a history, but a poem meant to convey Zedekiah's feelings—and Zedekiah could not possibly have agreed with Lilienblum.

⁹¹ The translation of these lines is a futile effort on my part to give an idea of the poem, the full power of which can be felt only in the original. I recall having seen an English translation of this poem, but I recollect neither the name of the translator nor that of the publication in which it appeared.

⁹² *Poems*, iii, p. 178.

⁹³ "Jewish Wars," II, vi, 3; vii, 3; xi, 5.

⁹⁴ Lilienblum, l. c., pp. 22-6.

⁹⁵ "Since I began to understand a book, I have not been able to discover one among living poets greater than he [*Lebensohn*] . . . and, therefore, I have endeavored to imitate him." *Letters*, no. 3.

⁹⁶ Smolensky, *Ha-Shahar*, x, p. 400.

⁹⁷ In a letter written in 1879, Gordon says: "This poem is far superior to its predecessors; it is the best poem I have written thus far" (*Letters*, i, p. 202).

⁹⁸ The prototype of *Vofsi ha-Kuzari* is supposed to be Joseph Zechariah (Stern), Rabbi of Shavly, Government of Kovno. If this be so, Gordon did this great Talmudist a lasting injustice. Rabbi Stern, as far as I could learn from men who knew him well, was always inclined to interpret Rabbinical laws in a liberal spirit. Moreover, he always refused, on principle, to issue bills

of divorce, fearing to take the responsibility on himself; and his attitude toward the question of divorce was so well known that all such cases had to be referred to Rabbis of other cities. Hence, the incident narrated in the poem cannot truthfully be ascribed to him, and Gordon's characterization of him is entirely unwarranted.

⁹⁹ A reference to Gen. xxiv. 57.

¹⁰⁰ Referring to Gittin, 59^a.

¹⁰¹ Liliënblum, who persists in interpreting Gordon literally, remarks on the line, "The City's fall we constantly recall," "in my opinion one who writes such a line is not a national poet" (l. c., p. 27). The critic evidently does not understand the difference between an exclamation of grief, and a positive statement of indifference, or he would have felt with the poet.

¹⁰² Mr. Brainin criticises this poem for its lack of psychologic description. He says (Ha-Shiloah, i, pp. 333-34), "We do not know the woman; we see only her shadow She does not say a word throughout the entire poem. What are her feelings? Gordon is silent about them." This is unjust. The poem is not intended as a psychologic study in the first place. The woman, as described by the poet, is overwhelmed with grief—and a person in such a state of mind is not given to much talking. Mr. Brainin is also unfair in saying that the poem was written only for the sake of the sarcasm against the Rabbi. Gordon has a higher object, which is embodied in the line: *הכן פקר אלי, צותה תורתי* (Poems, iv, p. 47).

¹⁰³ The Jewish Consistories, during the reign of Nicholas I., and the early days of Alexander II., had police power given to them within their jurisdiction.

¹⁰⁴ Comp. Gen. xxi. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Ha-Shiloah, i, p. 339.

¹⁰⁶ Letters, i, p. 210.

¹⁰⁷ Ha-Shiloah, i, pp. 336-71.

¹⁰⁸ Ha-Shahar, x, p. 462.

¹⁰⁹ Poems, iv, pp. 1-4.

¹¹⁰ Letters, i, p. 23.

¹¹¹ *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, 1892, xliii, p. 506.

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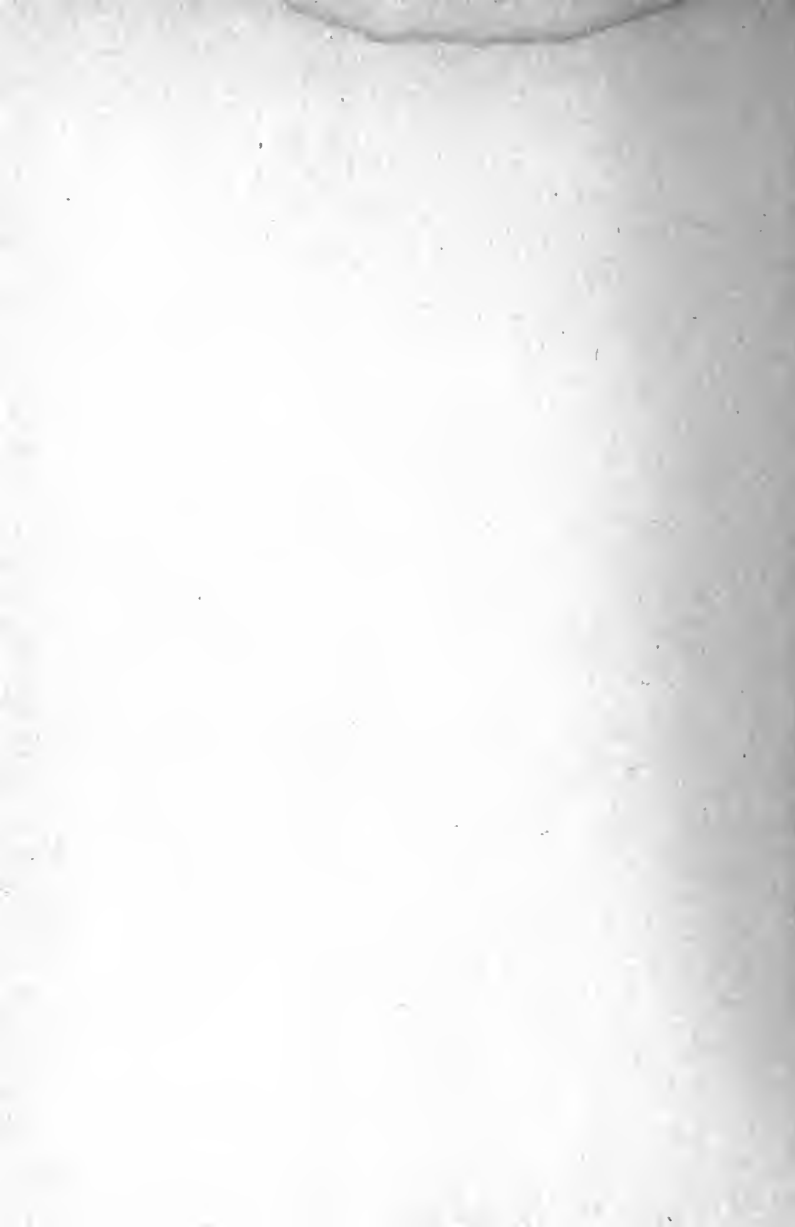
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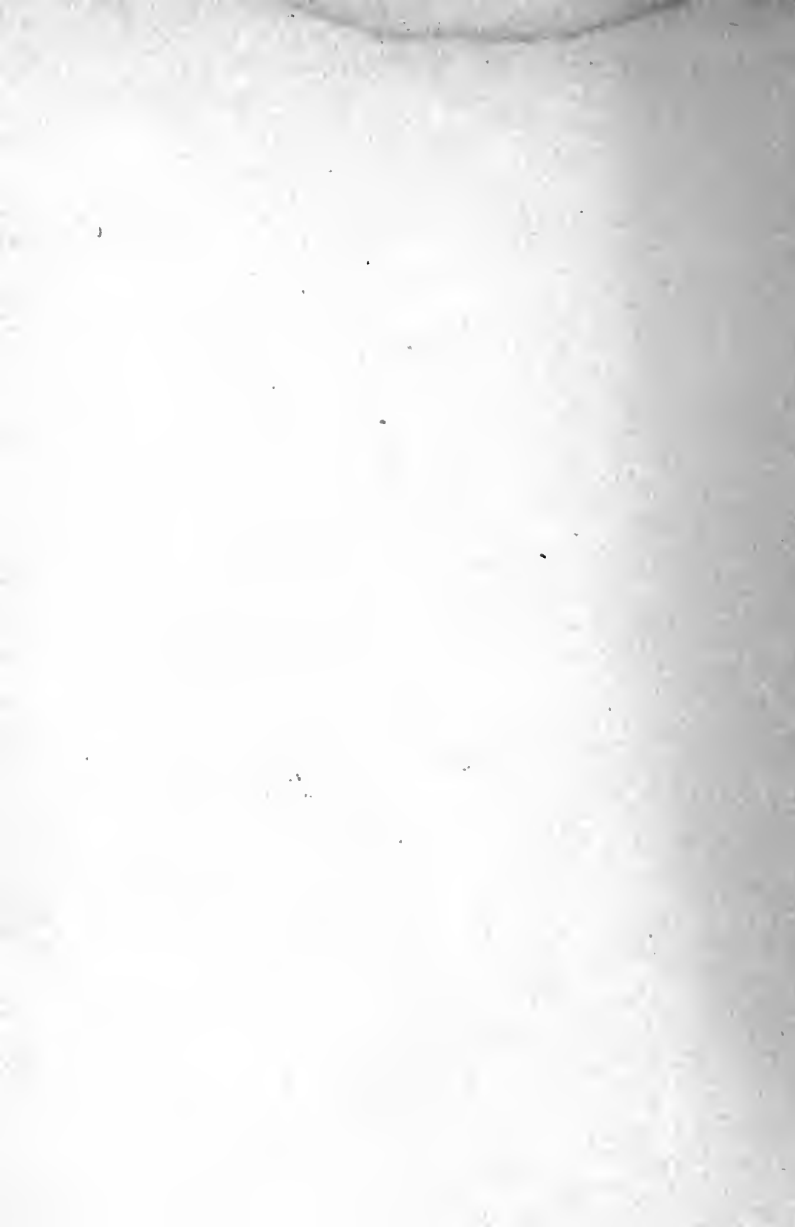
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